THE EDITORS: JONES v. CLINTON, R.I.P.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

Chuck Close's Racket—Jed Perl • Clinton's Real Crime—Peter Beinart

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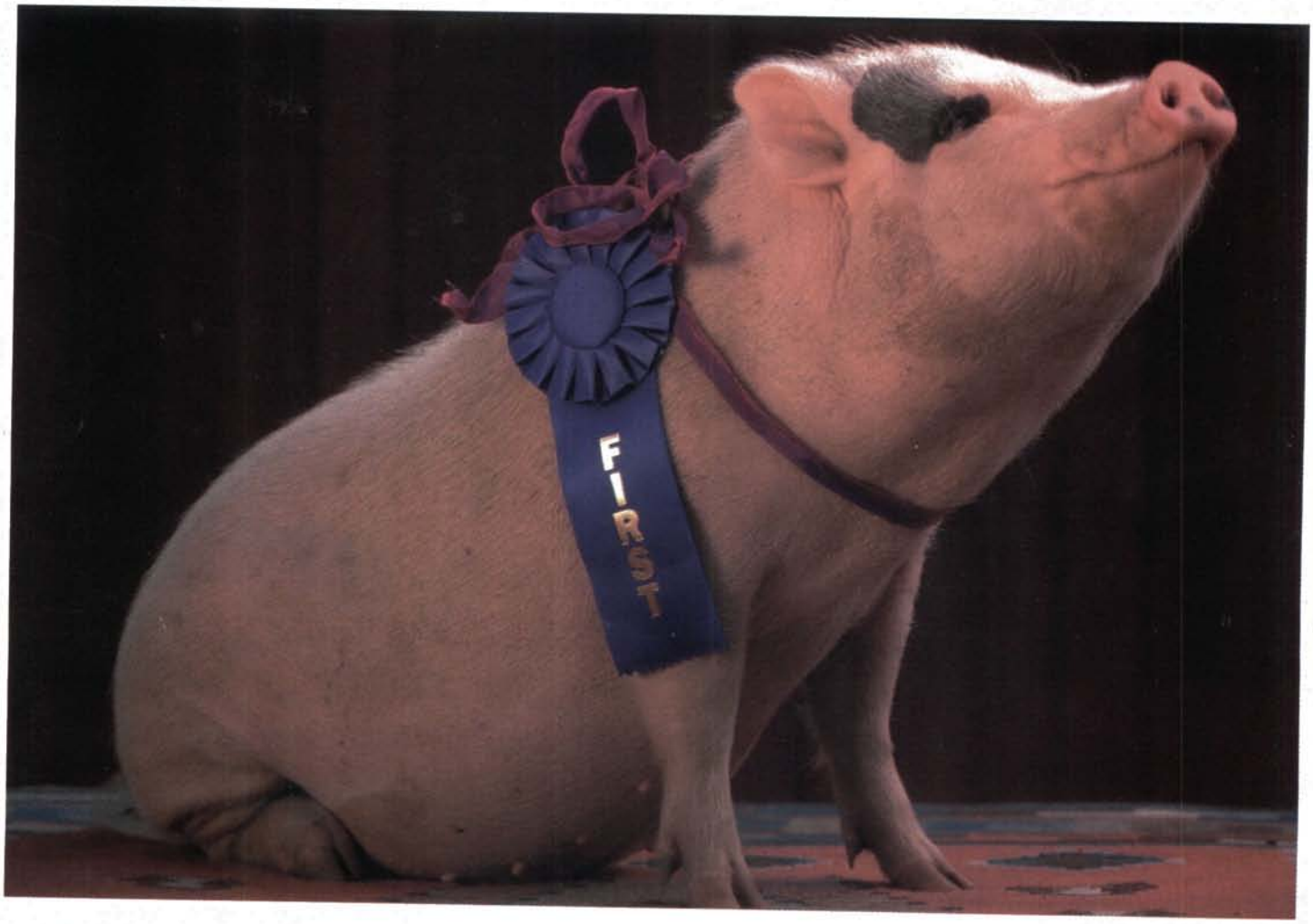

Everyone Hates Pork-Barrel Spending. Everyone Is Wrong.

JONATHAN COHN

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talking with Assembly participants

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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APRIL 20, 1998

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CORRESPONDENCE

Sid swipes

To the editors:

The Notebook item about me in the March 16 issue contains serious factual errors.

First, it states: "While still on the staff of *The New Yorker* a few years ago, he execrably advised his confidant Hillary Rodham Clinton to compile a critical dossier on a fellow journalist, *Washington Post* Whitewater reporter Susan Schmidt." In fact, numerous people at the White House complained generally about Schmidt's pro-Starr bias and distorted stories. I freely offered my opinion when this matter arose in conversation: If there were factual errors in her reports, they should be brought to the attention of the *Post*'s editors in order to correct the public record. I knew of no "report" whose existence I learned about only recently and which furthermore, I'm told, was abandoned. Apparently, I've also learned, the only consequence was that David Kendall, the president's attorney, wrote letters to the editor.

Second, the Notebook item states that I have been "dishing out rumors about the misfeasances of Starr's staff to any reporter within shouting distance." In fact, the stories about Starr's prosecutors were originated by reporters (with whom I had not spoken) at *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, the *Daily Journal* of Los Angeles, and the *New York Daily News*. They chronicled a series of grave cases of prosecutorial abuse, including reprimands by federal judges and fines. I freely discussed the professional records of Starr's prosecutors with other reporters. And it was about these contacts with members of the media that I was questioned by Starr's prosecutors in the grand jury.

Unfortunately, THE NEW REPUBLIC did not call me before it ran its Notebook item. Had anyone done so, I would have gladly clarified these matters, not least because of my long association with the magazine and its journalistic tradition.

SIDNEY BLUMENTHAL
Assistant to the President
Washington, D.C.

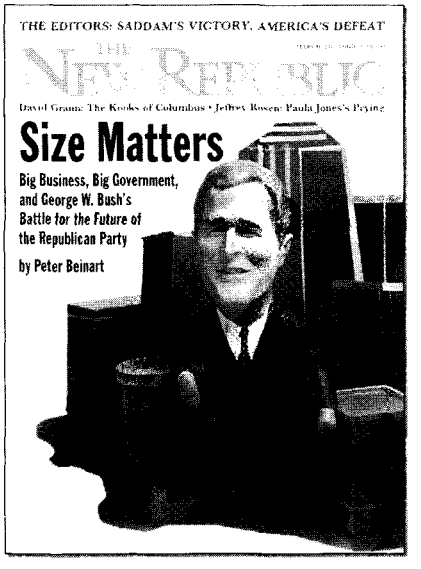
Rule book

To the editors:

Whatever its merit, Federal Rule of Evidence 415 *does* apply to the *Jones* case, contrary to Jeffrey Rosen's argument ("I Pry," March 16). The enabling act provides that the amendments (including Rule 415) "shall apply to all proceedings commenced on or after the effective date of such amendments, *including all trials commenced after the effective date of such amendments*" (emphasis added).

Although Paula Jones filed her suit in May 1994, before Rule 415's effective date of July 9, 1995, the trial itself has not yet "commenced"; thus, Rule 415 does apply. Rule 415 applies as well to post-July 1995 pre-trial "proceedings" such as the current summary judgment motion. In this context, the Jones case is not a "proceeding" but rather an "action," which comprises such varied proceedings and, ultimately, trial.

HENRY D. FETTER
Via the Internet


THE EDITORS: SADDAM'S VICTORY, AMERICA'S DEFEAT
THE NEW REPUBLIC
David Grann: The Kooks of Columbus • Jeffrey Rosen: Paula Jones's Prying
Size Matters
Big Business, Big Government, and George W. Bush's Battle for the Future of the Republican Party
by Peter Beinart

Iraq and a hard place

To the editors:

THE NEW REPUBLIC's March 16 editorial, "Saddam Wins," shows that its editors have a very short memory. At least twice in the last 55 years, the U.S. has had policies with fuzzy objectives, unreachable by the means assigned to them: in China, after 1945, and in Vietnam. The plan the Clinton administration had announced against Saddam Hussein was exactly of that nature. At the end, the goal seemed to be no more than reducing Saddam's arsenal of chemical and biological weapons; the Pentagon conceded that we had no sure way of finding them and also that bombing would mean the end of inspections, plus considerable civilian casualties. All this with very little international support—and of course removing Saddam was not the objective.

To get rid of him would certainly be welcome. But are the editors presently willing to advocate an invasion with ground forces—something the Bush administration did not undertake for impressive military and diplomatic reasons? Has the record of U.S. covert activities been such as to justify hope in covert action alone? And have the editors forgotten the troubles we have recurrently created for ourselves when we installed in foreign capitals leaders whose legitimacy was tainted by the very fact that we had anointed them, leaders whose hold on power was either fragile or as brutal as that exerted by the leader we had ousted? The "indispensable nation" has not always been the most farsighted.

The way of dealing with Saddam Hussein is containment. There are times when a state has to act alone, but not when the arrogance of power is combined with a foolish strategy.

STANLEY HOFFMANN
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Cooperative college

To the editors:

David Grann's Ohio Postcard ("Anti-War Zone," March 16) was clever, but, like many tourists, he misspelled the names and gleaned only the shallowest of surface impressions from a culture that was clearly foreign to him.

Grann mentions Antioch's long history of radicalism but misses the broader context of a liberal arts and cooperative education curriculum that produces such commitment and independence of thought on the part of its students, including a Sexual Offense Prevention Policy that turns out to be nothing more than old-fashioned good manners. The policy that he trivializes actually works and has been adopted very quietly by a number of other colleges and universities.

Grann also misses one bothersome detail of the student culture that he frames so exotically in his postcard from Ohio. These students acted on their values and were effective in doing so.

ROBERT H. DEVINE
Interim President, Antioch College
Yellow Springs, Ohio

Misconception

To the editors:

Margaret Talbot proves that she has no conception of what egg donation is all about ("The Egg Women," March 16). Certainly she is entitled to her ignorant (but preposterous) opinion that infertile couples who choose egg donation can "cancel the surprises and the contingencies that test and toughen the bonds between parents and children." In reality, however, donor couples never know

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anywhere near as much about the genetic mother as fertile couples do about each other. Many donor programs, moreover, require anonymity: no name, no photos, no job titles, no school identifications, no I.Q. test, no SAT results. Egg donation is the ultimate parental leap of faith, unaided by the 100 percent genetic bonding advantage most parents enjoy with their gestating fetuses.

To link, as Talbot does, these young women who become donors to the insane fertility doctor who artificially inseminated many women without their knowledge is itself, to use Talbot's phraseology, more than a little nuts.

BETH AND BENJAMIN POLLOCK
Seattle, Washington

Chutzpah shortage

To the editors:

Taken together, your articles "White Lies" (March 2), "Pardon Her" (March 2), and "Getting Personal" (March 16) form great arguments for abandoning the high ground on what we should demand of a president. Bill Clinton is a politician. He has to wiggle through crisis. Your job at THE NEW REPUBLIC is easier. You can be for right or wrong. If you don't have the editorial chutzpah to call a presidential blow job wrong, how can you maintain your integrity when it comes to the important Clinton critiques?

Leave the low-road rationalizations to *The Nation*. Bill Clinton's presidency won't collapse because you see Bill and Monica's tryst for what it was.

KURT REIGER
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Texas time

To the editors:

Congratulations on your article by Peter Beinart ("The Big Debate," March 16), which correctly points out that the future debate among Republicans will be between those who want some sort of big federal government to meet problems like war and depression versus those who want only local and state government.

JOHN MALLAN
Washington, D.C.

The editors welcome correspondence from readers. Letters should include the writer's full name, address, and telephone number; be typed double-spaced; and be held to under 200 words. Letters may be edited for space. Please address letters to: Correspondence, TNR, 1220 19th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. Letters may also be sent electronically to: TNR@aol.com

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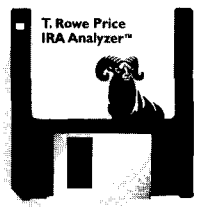

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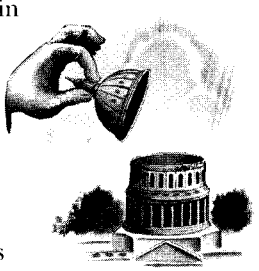
FROM WASHINGTON

Preemptive strike

Once upon a time, in the first precious days of 1998, commentators actually debated Bill Clinton's ideology. The administration leaked drops of policy to be announced at the upcoming State of the Union address. Pundits sniffed them and declared their vintage: Paleoliberal 1993 or Vital Center 1995. Now, just three months into the Age of Lewinsky, Bill Clinton's ideology seems hilariously irrelevant. Presidential politics has devolved into a brute struggle for legal survival.

But a Yale political scientist named Stephen Skowronek argues that the president's ideology is actually the key to understanding this whole sordid drama. Most presidents, after all, are not defined by questions of personal morality. Those who are, Skowronek suggests, tend to be the ones who habitually encroach on their opponents' ideological turf. Triangulation, which stymies familiar ideological attacks, diverts opponents into assaults on the trustworthiness of the triangulator. And, in the course of political battle, private infidelity becomes a metaphor for public infidelity.

Simplified, Skowronek's theory divides presidents into three types. "Reconstructive" presidents vanquish an old order, change the terms of national debate, and create lasting political alignments. Examples: Andrew Jackson, Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt, Ronald Reagan. "Affiliated" presidents gain legitimacy from a reconstructive president's political legacy. They try to innovate in response to new problems while pledging fealty to the inherited ideological framework: James Polk, Herbert Hoover, Harry Truman, George Bush.



Finally, "preemptive" presidents are failed reconstructive ones. They come to power in opposition to the prevailing political tradition, but that tradition is too resilient to permit a lasting realignment. Preemptive presidents win office not because the prevailing tradition has collapsed but because they coopt parts of it while disassociating themselves from their own party's past failures. And, since they inoculate themselves against ideological attack, their opponents focus on their alleged untrustworthiness instead. For antagonists, the preemptive president's willingness to discard past political commitments itself becomes evidence of a suspect character. And this directs their attention to whatever private immoralities actually exist. Skowronek's examples: John Tyler, Andrew Johnson, Richard Nixon—and Bill Clinton.

Take Tyler. He assumes the presidency in 1841, taking over after William Henry Harrison dies one month into office. The shadow of Democrat Andrew Jackson still dominates the political landscape, and the Whigs see the Tyler presidency as their chance to overthrow Jacksonianism and inaugurate a new order based upon their core principles: congressional supremacy and a national bank. But Tyler understands that a frontal assault on Jacksonianism would recreate the political dynamic that kept the Democrats in power for the last twelve years. So he coopts the Jacksonian model of a strong presidency and vetoes two bank bills proposed by his own party. The congressional Whigs link Tyler's ideological betrayal to charges of nepotism, and, in 1843, they try to impeach him for the "wicked and corrupt use of the power of appointment to office."

Skowronek sees similar patterns in other preemptive presidencies. Andrew Johnson, a pro-Union Democrat, abandons his party's secessionist legacy but also rejects the Radical Republican plan for extended federal oversight over the vanquished South. Once again, charges of political duplicity parallel charges of personal duplicity. (Congress even investigates Johnson's role in Lincoln's murder.) The House impeaches him on yet another charge, and the Senate acquits him by one vote.

Richard Nixon backs Democrats into a corner on issues like busing and crime. But he also promiscuously coopts the liberal agenda on welfare, affirmative action, Keynesianism, and détente. He doesn't really dismantle New Deal policy (in fact, he expands the welfare state as much, if not more, than LBJ). But his zigzags split FDR's black-white,

continued on page 41

Was Kyoto a Mistake?

"Thomas Moore has, among other things, emphasized two major points. First, the rise in atmospheric carbon dioxide we are experiencing at present will probably benefit agriculture in particular and mankind in general. Second, attempts by the more efficient developed countries to cut back significantly on their use of fossil fuel may seriously cripple their economies."

—Frederick Seitz
Past President
National Academy of Sciences

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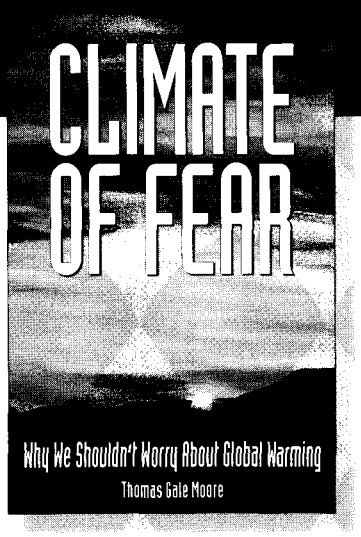
—Milton Friedman



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THE NEW REPUBLIC

APRIL 20, 1998

CASE CLOSED

As this issue of THE NEW REPUBLIC goes to press, we have just learned that Judge Susan Webber Wright of the federal District Court in Little Rock granted President Clinton's motion to dismiss the Paula Jones suit for failure to state a plausible claim of sexual harassment. Perhaps we can be forgiven for noting that, ever since the Jones suit was filed in May 1994, this magazine has expressed doubts as to whether Jones's allegations, even if true, constituted a legally convincing case of gender discrimination. (See "One Bite at the Apple," by Jeffrey Rosen, February 3, 1997.) As Jones's allegations metastasized into a soap opera that threatened to paralyze the presidency, we continued to insist that the suit should be summarily dismissed. And so, now that Judge Wright has rung down the curtain on this affair, we're tempted to say better late than never.

But one should not be too jubilant about the demise of the Jones suit. In a sense, its most pernicious effects have already been felt. Although Judge Wright deserves credit for reaching the right legal conclusion—albeit at the last possible moment—she was not as sure-footed in controlling the unrestrained discovery process that exploded into Bimbroglio. By permitting Jones's politically motivated lawyers to rummage through the president's sexual history, by failing to rule out questions about Clinton's alleged consensual affair with Monica Lewinsky until *after* those questions had been asked and answered, and, most damagingly of all, by allowing the Jones lawyers to make the president's sealed deposition public by stapling it to their motion opposing summary judgment a few weeks ago, Judge Wright showed an inexperience and lack of discernment that violated not only the president's privacy but that of the innocent women who were dragged into court one after another by the plaintiff's lawyers. Her unsteady performance also contradicted the Supreme Court's blithe assumption, expressed in the unanimous opinion allowing the Jones case to go forward, that proper case management by judges would prevent litigation from consuming too much of a sitting president's time and attention.

Rampant discovery is, of course, an endemic hazard of sexual harassment law, which is unconstrained by the procedural protections that apply in criminal cases involving sexual misconduct. Therefore, if President Clinton had been a private citizen, the suit would have had a less happy ending: Rather than fighting to the bitter end, he would have settled the suit after discovery began, ending the ordeal both impoverished and, in some sense, defeated. As it happens, the president was very nearly obliged to choose this route.

Still, it's hard not to hope that the dismissal of the Jones suit will have *some* salutary effects on the public debate about sexual harassment, which remains deeply in flux. When Jones's suit was filed, we worried that the facts alleged would be construed as a paradigm of illegal harassment, converting a single gross sexual advance, which hadn't previously been considered illegal under the federal civil rights laws, into a violation of the Constitution itself. By reminding us that an amorous employer can't tell whether or not an advance is unwanted until he asks, Judge Wright may restore some sanity and proportionality to the harassment debate.

And then there is Kenneth Starr. Technically, of course, his investigation may continue to grind toward its uncertain conclusion. His report seems likely to be sent to Congress, and it may well rehearse many of the embarrassing sexual allegations peddled by Jones's lawyers under the rubric of "obstruction of justice." But the wind has been taken out of Starr's sails, for he is now reduced to investigating whether Clinton may have lied, or asked others to lie, in depositions about a subject that was subsequently ruled inadmissable in a suit that was subsequently dismissed as legally meritless. Misdemeanors such as these, if proven, are hardly admirable, but hardly the stuff of impeachment.

In celebrating the demise of the Jones suit, we don't mean to work ourselves into too indulgent a mood about our priapic president. Bill Clinton has beaten this rap. But there's something a little unfair about the fact that this president, whose Justice Department has argued at every turn for the irresponsible expansion of sexual harassment law, has narrowly escaped being hoisted on his own petard. And, of course, his behavior, if the myriad sexual allegations are true, is reckless and deplorable even if not, strictly speaking, illegal. But, for now, let's lift a glass to a rare moment of clarity amid the generally mindless clamor about sexual harassment. If the Jones episode proves anything, it's that men and women need to have a long debate about how to deal with one another in professional settings—but that discussion should take place in the workplace, not in court. •

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NOTEBOOK

FINNISH LINE: A United Nations-sponsored study of Palestinian life in the territories has produced a rather creative explanation for that society's well-chronicled pathologies: They're the Israelis' fault. It seems that a Finnish researcher, one Hannu Halinen, has looked into the world of Gaza and the West Bank and has determined that the age-old tensions between fathers and children there are attributable to Israeli military occupation. "Post-traumatic stress" and "an inability to relate to parents, teachers, and other children" are laid at Israel's doorstep. Otherwise, all would have been well: The family structure would have been intact; the brutality toward the young would have been reined in. On the strength of Halinen's claims, the U.N. Commission on Human Rights approved four anti-Israel resolutions last month. But, of course, one finds social pathologies in lands far, far away from Israel. A terror blows through Algeria; its victims are the young (young women in particular). That war is at once a cultural and a generational war. And a generational struggle plays out in the Arab world as a whole and in Iran. The truth of the elders has cracked, and the young have declared their own war on tradition and custom, and on political and cultural and sexual repression. Indeed, all societies caught in cruel and difficult historical dislocations visit their traumas on the young. In the West Bank and Gaza, the rebellion of the young (the "children of the stones"), which broke out in 1987, was exalted; authority there, it seemed, rested on a good throwing arm. This kind of exaltation has been a fact of Palestinian political life. And this kind of violence, once unleashed and paid homage to, has a way of sticking to one's world. Schooling, obedience, the rules, the acquisition of skills—all these were brushed aside as Palestinian society, and its supporters abroad, exalted the stones and those who threw them. Now, the children are adrift. It is hard for them to go back to routine, hard for them to muster the patience for the ways of order. We know this from the world of our inner cities, those truths that we ourselves have not been able to face and name. Gaza, too, has its own truth. The children were summoned to battle the enemies of God and of the homeland and to put the "collaborators" to flight. These were invitations to chaos, and they issued in a season of wilding and terror. The children have answered that call to violence, and now they cannot be disarmed and taught the civic virtues of patience and obedience. This is known in the hard streets of Gaza and Nablus and is well-understood by those who cross the enforcers of Hamas and the masked boys who terrorize with abandon. From Helsinki and Geneva, though, the world can be whatever the functionaries and conjurors of the U.N. wish it to be.

DIPLOMATIC DISSERVICE: One could credibly (if not always persuasively) argue that American political ethics laws go too far. But Heather Foley, wife of Thomas Foley, who is the current U.S. ambassador to Tokyo and former speaker of the House, sure picked an odd forum to air her complaints last week. In an appearance at the Japan Press Club in Tokyo, Mrs. Foley—a former Hill staffer and still her husband's chief political adviser—explained that "our system has gone too far," then went on to describe this well-known example of ethics regulation excess: "If you breakfast with someone and have a coffee and rolls, that is okay. But if you have a croissant, that is over the rule." Whatever her argument's merit, the timing of its delivery could not have been worse. The Japanese are currently contemplating their first-ever ethics legislation—legislation that would, among other things, cut down on the notorious collusion among government officials and business leaders that hampers U.S. firms in Japanese markets. The U.S. has lobbied hard on this point: last month, a report by the U.S. trade representative excoriated the Japanese for just such practices. But Mrs. Foley's comments vitiated the American message, and the Japanese media wasted no time in relating the news. "Her criticism of U.S. ethics laws appears underlined by her confidence that those working for the good of society, either as a public servant or private citizen, cannot trade their conscience for cash," explained *The Daily Yomiuri*. All we really ask of our embassies abroad is that they stick to U.S. foreign policy. But that seems to have been a bit too much to ask of Mrs. Foley.

FARM HARM: Last month, Republicans introduced a bill to address an allegedly dire rural crisis: a farm worker shortage. "In Oregon it's a very big problem," says a spokeswoman for Senator Gordon Smith. "We've heard from farmers throughout the state about the enormity of it." So Smith proposes to import as many as 40,000 temporary hands. The concern for farm states is, of course, heartening—as is the implied interest in the well-being of Mexican workers who'd make up the new labor pool. But this is an old ruse. As a December report from the General Accounting Office shows—indeed, as nearly every recent report on the subject has shown—there is no farm labor shortage. The GAO report surveyed 20 counties with large populations of farm workers, and in 18 the jobless rate exceeded the national average; in 11 unemployment even reached double-digits. (To take an example from Smith's own state, the jobless rate in Salem, Oregon, a community with a high proportion of farm laborers, is 5.8 percent.) So what's really going on here? Importing new farm laborers will keep competition high for the farm jobs, which will, in turn, keep wages comfortably low for politically connected agricultural interests. It's a particularly odious ploy because it pits Mexican laborers who currently hold jobs here—and depend on them for legal residency—against their countrymen who desperately want that status, even if it means suppressing living standards. Smith's spokeswoman advises against hasty judgment: "It's a pilot program, and there are a lot of questions that will be answered." Yes, such as: Who will this bill really benefit? •

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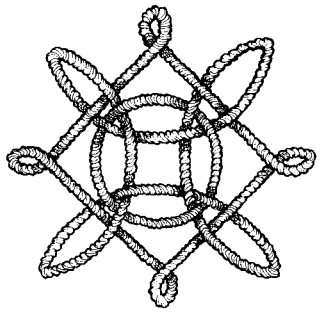
THE HARD QUESTIONS

SORRY ABOUT THAT

By Ronald Steel

This has been a busy couple of weeks for regrets. First, the Vatican, tackling the troubling links between the Holocaust and the Church's teachings about the Jews, called for repentance on the part of Catholics who did nothing to oppose the genocide. Then, Bill Clinton, on a swing through Africa, apologized for a variety of American sins, including involvement in the slave trade, coddling of African dictators, neglect of the continent, "complicity" in apartheid, and failure to stop the slaughter in Rwanda.

These two efforts by the Church and by Clinton, both earnest but also fumbling and unsatisfying, raise the challenging question of how those who live in the present can deal with the sins and omissions of the past. Where does responsibility for the past begin, and where does it end? Who has the authority, or the burden, of speaking for the sinners, and who has the right to represent those whose ancestors were sinned against?



This is neither an easy problem nor a new one, and moralists have been grappling with it, mostly unsuccessfully, throughout the ages. Modern politicians, with their concerns about coalitions, majorities, and interest groups, generally have little of interest to say about it. Holy men, who are also leaders of great religious bureaucracies, suffer from similar institutional constraints. For a true confrontation between the conflicting demands of goodness and evil, of faith and expediency, one must turn to the ruminations of isolated—and even tormented—individuals like Dostoevsky. Princes of the Church, like princes of the state, live in a world of practicality and compromise.

The Vatican's long-awaited document on the Holocaust tried to bridge the gap between those who wanted a full apology for the Church leadership's failure to oppose actively the genocide during World War II and those who believed that it had done what it could to mitigate the evil. While the statement does not criticize Pope Pius XII for his silence on the death camps, it does admit the existence of centuries of "anti-Judaism" in Christian religious teaching—even though it sharply distinguishes this from Nazi anti-Semitism.

This understandably failed to mollify those, like the editors of TNR, who wanted a full apology for the Church's historic scapegoating of the Jews as "Christ-killers." Yet, if it was reluctant to admit error, the document was an important effort to condemn the failure of many Christians to aid the persecuted Jews, to admit "sentiments of anti-Judaism in some Christian quarters," to call for penitence on the part of Christians for their coreligionists' failures during World War II, to deplore the "hatred, persecutions, and displays of anti-Semitism directed against the Jews at any time and from any source," and to insist that the "Jews are our dearly beloved brothers."

Clinton tried to make amends as well, both for acts of commission—like the slave trade (in which the United States was joined by African chiefs who sold prisoners into bondage, the Arab traders who rounded them up, and the British and Portuguese fleets that brought them to the New World)—and for sins of omission—like neglect, indifference, and complacency (of which the United States is guilty no more than most other nations, including African ones).

To be sure, contrition can be good for the soul. The only problem is that it is so often selective. It's not so hard, after all, to condemn slavery. Who would defend it? And Clinton was quite right, in an eloquent speech he delivered in Rwanda, to point out that all nations, including the United States, failed a responsibility to halt the genocide there. But the beam in our own eye is harder to acknowledge when loud voices insist that it isn't there.

For example, consider the outcry from veterans organizations in 1995 when the Smithsonian Museum scheduled an exhibition (which it was ultimately forced to cancel) on the decision to use two atomic bombs against Japan in the final days of World War II. Or the vindictiveness that many Americans still feel toward Vietnam because the United States was defeated there. If any people is owed an official apology, it is the Vietnamese, for the years of untold suffering, carnage, and violence that the American government inflicted upon them. But there is no domestic constituency to applaud such a confession. Alongside the silence about Vietnam, the Vatican's efforts to come to grips with its own anti-Judaism and even Clinton's apologies to Africans seem noble and courageous.

Confronting the past truthfully is a painful ordeal. It opens old wounds and breeds dissension even among those who have made a guarded peace with one another. Yet a refusal to do so breeds resentments that fuel generations of hatred. The Turkish government, for example, has persistently refused to accept its responsibility for the genocide committed against the Armenian people in 1915. This has enraged Armenians, particularly in the diaspora, and poisoned relations between two peoples who remain inextricably linked. Contrast this, for example, with the German government's acceptance of an inherited responsibility for the sins of the Nazi era, its desire to make amends, and the resulting good relations it enjoys with the Jews, Poles, and others victimized two generations ago.

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Past injustices weigh heavily everywhere, among peoples and states, even as they weigh heavily in our personal lives. The acceptance of responsibility is the beginning of peace. Today in South Africa a traumatized people is coming to terms with the past through a truth commission that issues pardons in return for admissions of fault. The Czechs and the former East Germans have opened the files on the secret informers of the Communist era and, through the personal pain this entails, have begun to reach an accommodation with the past. In Chile and Argentina, the process remains incomplete, as evidenced by the current furor over the naming of former military dictator Augusto Pinochet as senator-for-life.

Violence, inequity, and cruelty are as much a part of our human condition as are charity, love, and forgiveness. We live all our lives, and through every generation, with this terrible tension. But it is also part of our condition to try to surmount our worst instincts and through honesty to seek a form of healing. This is what John Paul II has sought to do in his document, and Bill Clinton, too, in his ingratiating though earnest remarks. If the Croats could say this to the Serbs, and the Serbs to the Bosnians and the Kosovars, then even their troubled land might begin to heal itself. The path to reconciliation is tortuous and painful. But, as the Pope put it, "There is no future without memory." •

ON THE HILL

ADS HOMINEM

By Erika Niedowski

It was, by any standard, an attack ad. But, when House hopeful Bobby Russell launched his first negative television commercial in Kentucky's Sixth District last month, he didn't mention any of his six Democratic primary opponents. Instead, his target was someone not even running in the race at all: Ken Starr.

Overshadowed by several candidates with a better chance of snagging the party's nomination in the May primary, the Madison County prosecutor hopes he has found his own kind of Willie Horton—the single, angry visage that can turn an election. "Independent Counsel Ken Starr has spent five years and $40 million investigating the president," declares Russell in the 30-second spot. "And what's he got to show for it?"

This, it turns out, is the next stage of Bimbroglio, the place where the scandal meets the stump. As both parties march toward November 3, Starr's ongoing probe and Clinton's alleged sexual dalliances are creeping into campaign commercials and candidate propaganda, lending uncertainty to an election that, only three months ago, was expected to ratify the status quo.

Nate Coulter, one of four Democrats running to succeed retiring Senator Dale Bumpers in Arkansas, is campaigning on a six-point plan to curb the "unfettered power" of independent counsels. In his announcement speech last January, Coulter got the loudest applause—and the most press—when he suggested reforming the law that has empowered Starr. "We all know the special prosecutors are unpopular," explains John Baker, Coulter's campaign director. Indeed, polls show Starr's approval rating down to about 15 percent.

Republicans, meanwhile, are beginning to abandon the "keep quiet" strategy they adopted shortly after the scandal broke. Tom Roberg, who is challenging Democratic Representative David Price of North Carolina, recently aired a 60-second radio ad asking, "Do you remember an America where character, ethics, and honesty were the rule and not the exception?" Roberg wants to know when his opponent is going to stand up for a "higher ethical standard in Washington." So does Republican Peter Rusthoven, who is hoping to challenge former Governor—and Clinton ally—Evan Bayh in the Indiana Senate race. In appearances across the state, the former Reagan speechwriter has charged Bayh with endorsing a president who is morally challenged (which, by his calculation, makes Bayh morally challenged, too). John Price, one of Rusthoven's opponents in the primary, has gone further: He announced at a Lincoln Day fundraising dinner in February that, if elected, he would vote to impeach the chief executive.

Even though the scandal has left Clinton with high approval ratings—for now—many Republicans believe it could still taint less artful Democrats. Pollster Frank Luntz, one of the first strategists who urged Republicans not to speak out, is now telling them to do just that. "The season of silence must end," Luntz advised in a memo that circulated through the House Republican Conference two weeks ago.

Some targets seem riper than others. Democratic Senator Barbara Boxer of California, who was among Anita Hill's most ardent defenders and former Senator Bob Packwood's most vocal detractors, has found herself having to defend her awkward silence over the Clinton scandal. Decked out in a lapel button proclaiming "Character Matters," Congressman Frank Riggs, one of Boxer's GOP opponents, staged a press conference outside her Los Angeles office last month, calling on her to speak out about allegations that Clinton groped former White House volunteer Kathleen Willey. But Boxer declined to talk to reporters at the state party's recent convention. Her staff said she was recuperating from a strained tendon, but she was then seen prancing across the stage to the sounds of James Brown. "Hardly the Barbara Boxer of 1995," said Riggs spokesman Beau Phillips, referring to the senator's crusade against Packwood.

Republicans are even using the scandal to attack each

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other. In Tennessee, former state Senator Jim Holcomb, who is challenging Representative Bill Jenkins, told the *Kingsport Times-News* that Jenkins should speak up for "common decency and morality." And politicians of all stripes are using the scandal to raise money. Republican Charles Gerow, a primary challenger to Pennsylvania Representative Bill Goodling, invited FBI-agent-turned-Clinton-sexographer Gary Aldrich to host his first major fund-raiser.

The question is, even if flogging the scandal allows some candidates to cash in, will it all turn out to have been wasted effort in the end? "You won't get any traction out of it," said Democratic consultant Gary Nordlinger of both parties' strategy to politicize the whole affair. "You're wasting your money and getting diverted from your own message."

But GOP candidate Jerry Berg bought $9,000 worth of anti-Clinton radio ads right before Illinois's Nineteenth District primary last month anyway. "Growing up here, we learned values like honesty, integrity, and high moral character," declared Berg, who had begun calling for the president's resignation or impeachment. "I'm ashamed to say these aren't the values we see in Bill Clinton today." Berg lost by more than 25 points.

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How Russia helps Iran's missile program.

WARHEADACHE

By David S. Cloud

Vice President Al Gore was finally making headway. In a mid-January phone call, his friend then-Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin told him that he would soon issue a decree aimed at shutting off the flow of Russian missile technology to Iran. For months, the Clinton administration had been hoping the warm Gore-Chernomyrdin relationship would produce just such a proliferation breakthrough. Now, that moment seemed at hand. After meeting with Chernomyrdin in March, Gore felt confident enough to invite a small group of his former colleagues in the Senate down to the Old Executive Office Building to personally lobby against a pending bill that would target Russia with economic sanctions for aiding Iranian proliferation. Gore himself had helped draft a similar law against Iran when he was still in the Senate. But now, he told the senators, sanctions were not necessary. "He argued that they had finally impressed on the Russians the seriousness of the problem," said one senator present. Chernomyrdin's January decree was proof.

Three weeks later, Chernomyrdin is out of office—dismissed abruptly by President Boris Yeltsin along with most of the Cabinet—and the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission, the main forum for dealing with Russia on proliferation issues, is in limbo. U.S. officials are wondering how zealously Yeltsin's new ministers will enforce Chernomyrdin's decree. A better question, however, is whether the administration's strategy for persuading Moscow to crack down on the illicit exports to Iran ever held much promise in the first place.

In practice, it's taken nearly a year to get Moscow to take any action at all. The Kremlin canceled an Iranian contract with a Russian rocket-engine manufacturer and expelled a Tehran diplomat seeking missile technology. However, the training of Iranian scientists and the testing of missile components in Iran have continued, according to both U.S. officials and outside proliferation experts. Iranian missile-builders "seem to be making progress at a very rapid pace," concedes a senior U.S. official.

Worse, Russia appears to be directly assisting them—in blatant violation of the Missile Technology Control Regime, an international agreement which Russia adopted in 1993. Yeltsin's government first denied this, then blamed rogue operatives. But it's not just out-of-work scientists and cash-strapped factories far from Moscow that have aided the Iranians. According to U.S. officials, there is clear evidence that Russia's Federal Security Service, the successor to the KGB, is involved in training Iranian weapons scientists.

Even if Russian help to Iran were to end tomorrow, the damage is largely done. A year ago, the CIA posited that it would take roughly a decade for Iran to deploy a medium-range ballistic missile. Today, the agency's analysts have concluded that Iran could finish development of its Shahab-3 missile within two years, perhaps sooner. The Shahab-3, one of four missiles under development, has a range of 800 miles—long enough to reach Israel—and is considered accurate enough to carry chemical and biological warheads.

Still, although work on the Shahab-3's rocket engines is well-advanced, it may yet be possible to limit the help Iran receives on the guidance system—but only if Russian authorities act promptly. Unfortunately, the Clinton administration has been reluctant to press Russia to stop proliferation. Even after Israel alerted the administration to the seriousness of the problem in early 1997, the U.S. interest in preventing Iran from acquiring ballistic missiles has taken a back seat to its interest in promoting a stable Yeltsin government. Take the Clinton administration's assiduous effort to block the sanctions legislation that would target Russia. U.S. officials maintain such sanctions might hurt the Russian economy and provoke a backlash from hard-liners—and then progress on nonproliferation would really suffer.

That's a reasonable argument—if you assume that Russia's senior leaders are trustworthy enough to act as partners in combating proliferation. But there is plenty of debate within the U.S. foreign policy community on

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this point. Some senior U.S. intelligence officials, for instance, have argued against revealing too much information to the Kremlin about Russian companies and institutes that are known to be assisting the Iranians.

The administration, however, takes the opposite view. "There's a basic assumption that the Russians we are talking to are good guys, that they can be trusted to do the right thing," said a former intelligence officer familiar with the internal debate. The administration figures that curtailing Iranian proliferation is as much in Russia's interest as it is in ours. After all, as Frank Wisner, the U.S. special envoy on this issue until last month, put it, "Why would Russians want to see their own territory threatened?" And U.S. policy is predicated on offering Moscow economic incentives to go along—essentially offering lots of carrots in place of the tough stick of sanctions.

This was the strategy employed to obtain Chernomyrdin's decree back in January. At the time, Middle East hawks—such as the American Israel Public Affairs Committee—were pressing the administration to adopt a tougher stance toward Russia, for example, by reducing investment in Russia's space program until Russia demonstrated more progress on the anti-proliferation front. But Wisner offered an alternative plan. At a Moscow meeting with Yuri Koptev, the imposing head of the Russian Space Agency, Wisner suggested that the U.S. would consider lifting its quota on the number of U.S.–built satellites that can be launched into orbit from Russian rockets if Moscow agreed to cut off the Iranians.

For Koptev, the proposal was a no-brainer. The estimated $20 million to $40 million that sales of missile technology to Iran brings in is peanuts compared to the $3 billion to $5 billion his agency could net over the next five years if it were allowed to launch additional U.S.–built satellites. So there was little surprise when Koptev matched Wisner's proposal with an offer to draft "catch-all controls" aimed at restricting the export of goods that can be used to produce weapons of mass destruction. Several days later Chernomyrdin gave Gore the good news: He would issue his decree.

However, if previous negotiations of this kind are any guide, there's reason to doubt the reliability of Chernomyrdin's decree—even if he hadn't been pushed out of office. Back in the early 1990s, when Glavkosmos, a Russian export firm, was found to be selling cryogenic rocket engines as well as the means to produce them to India, the Bush administration slapped Glavkosmos and the Indian Space Research Organization with sanctions for two years. If Russia canceled the contract, the U.S. said, it would consider lifting the sanctions. Soon after the Clinton administration took office, it worked out an agreement to do just that: sale of the rocket engines themselves could go forward, but Moscow had to promise not to provide production technology to Indian scientists. As an inducement to cooperate, the White House offered Russia $400 million in joint space projects and the possibility of another $400 million later. Today, there are strong indications, according to former intelligence analysts and proliferation experts, that Russia quietly transferred much of the production technology to India anyway—in violation of its high-level promises.

Five years later, the name of the country receiving missile assistance may have changed, but the Russian modus operandi remains the same. Indeed, two U.S. officials confirmed that individuals associated with Glavkosmos are suspected of involvement in transfers of missile technology to Iran. Yet, incredibly, other senior U.S. officials assert that they consider the Glavkosmos-India case a model for the current negotiations.

DAVID S. CLOUD is diplomatic correspondent for *The Chicago Tribune.*

Moynihan's Social Security fix.

VERY PAT

By Jonathan Chait

Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan's plan to reform Social Security, which he unveiled at Harvard in mid-March, is nothing if not courageous. We know this because even his ideological foes say so. "It is a courageous idea," conservative columnist James Glassman wrote in *The Washington Post.* A lengthy *Wall Street Journal* editorial lauded Moynihan's "daring." Moynihan himself agrees. "It is a time for courage," he declared.

This epic of courage is a familiar ritual for Moynihan, the philosopher king. He is, after all, a real intellectual, who made his reputation during the '60s by telling uncomfortable truths about urban poverty at great cost to his own standing among liberals. Moynihan assiduously cultivates his iconoclastic image—adorning his books with photos of himself thoughtfully stroking his chin, and generally infusing his every pronouncement with high intellectual and moral purpose. So, when Pat Moynihan, Champion of the Welfare State, breaks with the Social Security orthodoxy, his stance presumptively occupies the moral high ground.

Should it? The plan makes three distinct changes. The first would make Social Security a pay-as-you-go system. Currently, Social Security's annual revenues from payroll taxes exceed the annual cost of Social Security payments to retirees. The rationale for building up surplus revenue is analogous to storing crops in anticipation of a coming famine. When the baby-boom generation retires, the ratio of workers to retirees will shrink. Building up surpluses in the Social Security trust fund today, when times are good, allows Social Security to run deficits in the future, when we will have a worker shortage.

Moynihan himself helped to engineer this system in 1983. But now, he says, Social Security taxes should raise

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PERCEPTIONS Percent of Americans **18-34** who expect these things to happen when they get old.		REALITIES Percent of Americans **65 and Over** who have experienced these things.
77	**More Travel**	46
76	**More Hobbies**	56
69	**Less Active**	41
64	**New Skills**	28
62	**More Respect**	53
58	**Less Stress**	50
48	**Serious Illness**	25
46	**Get Social Security**	90
47	**Can't Drive**	15
44	**Get Medicare**	80
43	**Fewer Responsibilities**	50
41	**Trouble Walking**	30
38	**Lose Bladder Control**	14
32	**Less Sex**	37
29	**Become Senile**	2
29	**Dependent on Kids**	5
26	**Be Lonely**	24
13	**Be Poor**	18

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no more revenue than necessary to cover its year-to-year costs. (Thus the term "pay as you go.") The switch is needed, Moynihan says, because the trust fund is "a pure illusion." That is, the federal government does not really save the Social Security surplus; instead, it spends it on the rest of the budget—in effect, writing IOU's to the trust fund. Thus, Moynihan concludes, when the baby boomers retire and we need those surpluses to pay out Social Security benefits, the money won't be there. So he proposes to drop the pretense and cut the payroll tax by two percentage points, then start hiking it several decades from now, until in 2060 it becomes one point higher than it is today.

DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Now, here's the problem with his argument. While it's true that the trust fund consists of nothing more than IOUs, it does not necessarily follow that the government won't make good on those IOUs. Even if the trust fund doesn't physically exist, it denotes obligations that Social Security recipients will demand. When it comes time to pay those obligations, the government can cover the cost by raising taxes, cutting other spending, or borrowing. In order to believe that the money won't be there, you have to believe that future governments will withhold Social Security payments that they are legally permitted to make. You must assume, in other words, that Social Security recipients will settle for less than their entitled benefits. But that's absurd. One thing is certain about Social Security: Its beneficiaries demand every penny they have coming to them, and their political representatives unfailingly oblige.

And, whatever the idea's merit, why does it qualify as courage? Moynihan's proposal means cutting taxes now and hiking them later, shifting the burden from ourselves onto future generations of workers. It's not particularly brave to raise taxes on people who will still be working in 2060, unless Moynihan is worried about losing support from the unborn workers of the next millennium.

The plan's next element is to hold all future cost-of-living increases to one percentage point less than the rate of inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index—the government's inflation gauge. This would save billions of dollars and, along with some other small changes, effectively cut benefits by 35 percent after 25 years, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

That would indeed be bold—if Moynihan weren't doing it on the sly. But, instead of coming right out and admitting that he is proposing a cut in Social Security benefits, Moynihan characterizes his CPI change as a mere technical correction. As he told CNN, "There's not an economist I know who does not think ... that the Consumer Price Index overstates inflation."

If that's true, then he must not know very many economists. Moynihan sits on one end of a broad spectrum of thinking about the CPI. While a 1996 commission on the CPI stacked with economists predisposed toward Moynihan's view concluded that the CPI overstated inflation by a little more than one percentage point, many economists thought that figure was too high. Some even thought that the CPI *understated* inflation. And, since then, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, which compiles the CPI, has, on its own, adjusted its methods of calculating the CPI so that it reduces the recorded rate of inflation by a third of a percentage point. Future changes in BLS methodology could reduce measured inflation even further. In short, fewer economists than before think the CPI exaggerates inflation, and the proportion who do will likely drop. Yet Moynihan would hold Social Security one full point below measured inflation permanently. If the CPI runs at three percent, then Social Security benefits would rise by only two percent. This is a way of cutting Social Security without having to admit it.

Here, Moynihan ascends to his highest dudgeon. "You have to say no to some very powerful interest groups," he thundered on CNN. "They know who they are.... They are right here in Washington. They have prevented the subject of the cost-of-living index adjustment from ever being raised." Moynihan would know. In

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early 1993, Clinton floated a modest plan to eliminate the inflation adjustment for Social Security benefits for just one year. Moynihan denounced it. "Proposing to take away cost-of-living allowances from retired persons—I mean that's a real blow," he said. "You wonder how many more millions of people you want in poverty." Now, Moynihan is proposing a vastly more draconian cut than the one he once decried so unequivocally. As he swings from one extreme to the other, the only consistency of his position is its sanctimonious tone.

The part of Moynihan's plan that accounts for its appeal to conservatives is a provision for personal savings accounts. Workers could invest two percent of their wages in private equities or bonds and accumulate the proceeds tax free. This would do two things. First, it would invest Social Security funds in private markets, which produce higher returns than merely buying U.S. Treasury bonds (the current method of investment); second, it would individualize the system so that your level of benefits would depend on how well you invest. The first aspect would clearly alleviate the coming Social Security shortfall by generating a higher rate of return. But you could do this simply by investing some of the trust fund, as a lump sum, in private securities. You don't need to individualize the system to get a higher rate of return.

Moynihan's proposal looks, on the surface, like a compromise: All workers would receive a fixed benefit from Social Security in addition to whatever they could get from their individual accounts. But the apparent balance would actually be unstable. Since the trust fund would remain invested in low-yield U.S. Treasury bonds, most people would get higher returns from their private accounts. Social Security's rate of return would suffer even more in comparison because it is not a private pension system but rather a collective social insurance program. Parts of it pay for benefits to widows and the disabled, and the poor get a better deal than the wealthy. That means your Social Security taxes don't all pay for your own retirement; a portion is siphoned off for the less fortunate. With a PSA, you could keep the whole thing.

Eventually, most people would demand that more of their payroll taxes go to their personal accounts, and less to Social Security. At the bottom of this slippery slope lies full privatization. *That's* why Republicans love it. As Moynihan himself predicted in a *New York Times* op-ed last year, "Once the great majority of citizens found that they would do better in the private investment part of this new system, support for the redistributive aspects of Social Security would quickly erode."

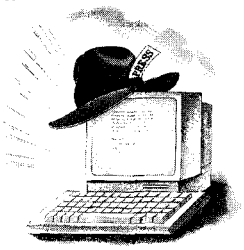
Moynihan explains his reversal as a concession to politics. "The call for privatization of Social Security all but drowned out the more traditional views," he said. He makes an analogy to welfare: If you don't acknowledge the opposition, you will lose the system. Maybe Moynihan is right that he needs to bend his policies for political expediency. But that's a strange definition of courage. •

HONG KONG DISPATCH

THE NEW ORDER

By Edward A. Gargan

Just weeks after China raised its flag over this former British colony last July, Hong Kong's business district began to echo with the whine of cement drills and the tattoo of jackhammers. Beijing's hand-picked administrator for Hong Kong, a shipping tycoon named Tung Chee-hwa, had decided to erect wrought-iron fences around the low-slung government office buildings scattered across downtown. During 156 years of colonial rule, Hong Kong's British governors had never seen the need to cloister behind fencing. However, Tung clearly felt the gold-tipped, thick-stemmed bars were a top priority. So far, the newly installed gates remain open. But the fences have become a symbol of the new order—a new government that is more secretive, less democratic and, if the polls are right, a good deal less popular than that of the British.



Tung and his fellow Beijing loyalists, of course, maintain that nothing has changed in Hong Kong since the last British governor, Chris Patten, stepped aboard the royal yacht *Britannia* shortly after midnight on July 1 and sailed off into history. "It's business as usual," Tung chirps when people ask how things are going.

In fact, much has changed here, and much continues to change. Until Chinese suzerainty, there was no mistaking Hong Kong for China. Most Hong Kongers were richer and freer than those on the mainland. They were educated differently. They loudly expressed their views on call-in radio programs. Now, some of those distinctions are being chiseled away. Next year, the number of high schools that teach in English will be cut by 50 percent, and, notwithstanding the uproar from Hong Kong parents, eventually all high schools will be required to teach in Cantonese. More generally, the freedoms Hong Kongers used to take for granted appear increasingly endangered. On his very first day in office, Tung abolished every one of Hong Kong's democratic institutions, right down to the local councils. The most prominent body dismissed was the Hong Kong legislature, which Patten had sought to make somewhat more representative of popular will during his five-year term.

Patten's steps toward democracy had admittedly been rather timid. At his tenure's end, only a third of the 60 legislative seats were directly elected. Meanwhile, one-

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half of the seats remained "functional constituencies"—meaning they were chosen by corporations or professional, entertainment, and religious groups. The remaining ten seats were appointed by an electoral commission.

Nonetheless, Patten's modest democratization effort was denounced by Beijing as a violation of secret agreements reached with Patten's London masters. The real reason for China's rage was not difficult to fathom: In the first—and last—election under the Patten system (held in 1995), Hong Kong's voters decisively turned out for the Democratic Party, whose platform calls for the introduction of a fully elected legislature and an elected chief executive. Beijing's preferred candidates, by contrast, suffered a crushing defeat. Not surprisingly, after dismissing the 1995 legislature, Beijing appointed a provisional one that included many of the defeated Beijing loyalists.

This May, Hong Kong's citizens will be allowed to elect a new legislature to replace the provisional one. Still, Tung shows little interest in implementing the "Basic Law" that Beijing agreed to for Hong Kong and which calls for gradual movement toward direct elections. Instead, he has scrapped the system of direct contests that was used to fill a third of the seats during the Patton era and replaced it with a new procedure based on proportional representation. This will enable the less popular pro-Beijing parties to at least slightly increase their representation in the legislature because, even though they will not win outright in any constituency, they will get some votes, and their presence in the legislature will be based roughly on the proportion of votes they garner. Furthermore, not only has Tung kept the old "functional constituency" seats in place, he has limited the number of people allowed to choose them from two million to fewer than 200,000.

Tung's changes practically guarantee that the new legislature will be subservient to Beijing. And that's clearly his goal. His electoral scheme, he explains, is designed to move Hong Kong toward democracy "neither too fast nor too slow." Indeed, he has indicated that the transition might take twelve to 15 years. Many Hong Kong residents find it difficult to understand how a society with one of the highest per capita incomes in the world can move too quickly toward democracy. But Tung and his colleagues see no contradiction in letting Hong Kongers decide where to work, how to invest their savings, and where to go on vacation, while denying them the right to choose their government.

The Tung administration also appears unenthusiastic about the vigor with which Hong Kongers are criticizing his government and Beijing. At the annual gathering of China's parliament in Beijing a few weeks ago, a prominent Hong Kong businessman and longtime Beijing supporter denounced Hong Kong's government-funded radio and television network for questioning government policies. The stations, created under the British administration along the lines of the BBC, are supported by tax revenues but have traditionally been independent of government editorial control. Yet Tung, who was also at the meeting, failed to defend the stations in the face of this attack. Instead, he opined that "while freedom of speech is important, it is also important for government policies to be positively presented."

Tung clearly plans to translate this philosophy into action. When Hong Kong's new legislature is seated in May, one of Tung's first items of business will be to introduce a law on subversion, treason, sedition, and secession. Hong Kong's democrats are understandably concerned about the threat the law might pose to free expression, whether in the press, in public protest, or through political organizations. But Tung, a corporate chief executive accustomed to giving orders, has already displayed his impatience with those who would question his judgment. His taciturn encounters with Hong Kong's raucous and relentless press are a sharp departure from those of his predecessor Patten, who reveled in the contest of wits with reporters. Tung, in short, presents himself as a traditional Chinese patriarch, the authoritarian family figure who, while genuinely absorbed in the welfare of his family, has no truck with rebellious children.

Nevertheless, Tung's administration takes great pains to assure the international business community that, whatever the new limits on democracy in Hong Kong, the rule of law remains sacrosanct. But does it? Last year, a leading democracy activist, Emily Lau, decided to test the extent to which Hong Kong's existing laws applied to Beijing institutions based in Hong Kong. Lau filed a formal request with Xinhua—nominally the New China News Agency but in reality the Chinese Communist Party's office here—for all its files on her and her political activities, many of which involved protests against Beijing policies. Under Hong Kong law, individuals who believe that information is being collected on them by any organization, public or private, may demand copies of their dossier; the organization is required to cough up its files within 40 days. But Xinhua waited ten months and then blandly claimed it had no files on Lau.

Lau then called on Hong Kong's chief legal officer, Elsie Leung, to file charges against Xinhua. Leung refused. And Leung has also declined to charge a prominent pro-Beijing newspaper owner who is accused of conspiring to defraud advertisers, despite mentioning her in the charges filed against her executives. Thus, it seems that institutions and individuals from the mainland are already getting special treatment under Hong Kong law. What consequence this will have as more and more mainland entities set up shop here remains to be seen.

Ironically, Hong Kong's new leaders are rushing to embrace a version of China that many mainlanders wish to escape. While Beijing loyalists in Hong Kong push for greater media controls, government secrecy, patriotic displays, and repression of the democratic activists, places like Shanghai are witnessing a rising tide of unease over communist social and political controls. Thus, China and Hong Kong are beginning to resemble two trains, barreling past each other in opposite directions.

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A journey into Africa's intellectual history.

ALL THE WAY TO TIMBUKTU

By Henry Louis Gates Jr.

There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation.

—David Hume

When I was a boy, kids used to threaten, "I'm gonna knock you clear to Timbuktu!" Of course, none of us knew where Timbuktu was, or even if there *was* a Timbuktu. I have to confess that, even as an adult, I thought stories of its magnificent library and university were part and parcel of the "Beethoven is Black" school of history. Still less did it ever occur to me that I would visit Timbuktu. But I was wrong. Timbuktu did exist, and it still does. I've been there.

During its glory, between the fifteenth and the eighteenth centuries, Timbuktu was widely known as "the gateway to the Sahara Desert" and "the most distant place on earth." The publication in 1526 of the *History and Description of Africa* by an Arab geographer named Leo Africanus catapulted Timbuktu into the European imagination. "The rich king of Tombuto," Africanus wrote, "hath many plates and scepters—gold, some whereof weigh 1,300 poundes: and he keeps a magnificent and well furnished court. He hath alwaies three thousand horsemen, and a great number of footmen that shoot poysoned arrows, attending upon him."

Yet the city's reverence for learning, its passion for knowledge, and its valuation of books struck Africanus as forcefully as its fabulous wealth: "There are numerous judges, doctors, and clerics, all receiving good salaries from the king. He pays great respect to men of learning. There is a big demand for books in manuscript, imported from Barbary. More profit is made from the book trade than from any other line of business."

This was an accurate account, notwithstanding Africanus's use of the hyperbole always attendant upon descriptions of the exoticized other. Timbuktu, the geographic crossroads where the civilizations of sub-Saharan Africa and the Mediterranean met, interacted, and fused, was not only rich. It was a world-class center of arts and letters. It was "a city of scholars," Elias Saad writes in his *Social History of Timbuktu*, where "a whole society came to be characterized by the status and role of its scholars."

P.E.H. Hair similarly noted in the *English Historical Review*: "In Timbuktu, scholarly disputations were held between individuals from all levels of society and almost all occupations, and concerned the practical structure and operation of the local society, which their thinking both reflected and molded, as much as they concerned the abstract problems of Islamic ethics and the universal dispensations of God. Philosophers were kings; or, at least, scholars were also notables, officials, merchants, and family heads; and their descendants held in memory the intellectual triumphs and questionings of their forebears."

Indeed, in Timbuktu, books were valued as much as salt, and salt as much as gold. The seeds for what would become the university of the Kingdom of Mali were planted in Timbuktu in 1325, when the intrepid Emperor Mansa Musa, returning from a seven-year pilgrimage to Mecca, began to deposit scholars there as well as thousands of books. At Musa's university, built around the Sankore mosque, some 25,000 students, led by hundreds of professional scholars, read tens of thousands of Arabic-language texts purchased or commissioned by Musa and his successors.

As a boy in West Virginia, I first heard of Timbuktu while reading the Sunday papers. I think it must have been in "Ripley's Believe It or Not." There they were: Black-skinned, turbaned men, tall, gaunt, and elegant, draped in white gowns, Moroccan leather-bound volumes under their arms, gliding into the library at the University of Timbuktu. Believe it or not, indeed.

To appreciate just how inconceivable this scene appeared to me then, you must consider that I was staring at it from the vantage of the early '60s, the great moment of African independence. The black Africans in that picture, with their books and gowns, were vaguely reminiscent of the Kingfish and Andy in the popular "Punjab of Javapour" episode of "Amos 'n' Andy" that anticipated the imitation of African accents, dress, and demeanor that some American Negroes would use in the '50s and '60s to trick white racists into allowing them to patronize segregated restaurants and hotels, often unmasking themselves just outside of the establishment after the ruse had proven successful. But these guys in

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"Ripley's" were no Punjabs of Javapour. These were some *serious* brothers, strutting like dons at Oxbridge.

I was not the only brother who had been impressed. The older men, many of them my father's coworkers on the loaders' platform up at the paper mill, who gathered on Saturdays down at Mr. Combie Carroll's Barber Shop whether or not they needed a haircut, must have seen the same item, because that's all they wanted to talk about—that is, when they weren't talking about trying to get some booty or who was spotted in the backseat of whose car on the way up to the colored cemetery to "park." On the day that item appeared in the papers, this image of black scholars was on everybody's minds.

"There's shit buried deep in books," Mr. Combie Carroll almost whispered in his most conspiratorial tone, "that the white man don't even *want* us to see." "That's right," Mr. Nate responded, slapping Combie Carroll a low five. "Black Africans, too ... *coal* black." Nappy minds had suddenly been jerked awake in stunned awe in the communal ritual setting of a packed and hot Saturday afternoon, the men huddled between Combie's lone barber chair, his gas stove at one end, an old-fashioned red "sliding" Coke machine at the other.

I don't know what the humid silence of the grown men meant exactly, but, for me, the vision of black men, skin gleaming under a Saharan sun, speaking Arabic and God-only-knew-what other languages, fired my imagination even more than did the men's weekly tales of male conquest. Huddled there, in the nappy warmth of Combie Carroll's Saturday circle, peppered with visions of black men writing *books* in Arabic, books about astronomy and cosmology, medicine and the practical arts, treatises on the eternal conundrum of human existence, I felt a curious kind of pride, the sort of pride I'd only felt the day Willie Mays made his famous over-the-shoulder catch of Vic Wertz's drive in the 1954 World Series or when Jackie Robinson's heroics won a World Series game. Granted, Timbuktu was a long way from Piedmont, West Virginia—at least the Piedmont of the sweat and grime of the loaders' platform at the paper mill. But the image of black men writing books was as vivid to me that day as was the scent of Old Spice that Mr. Combie Carroll splashed with unusual abandon on the shaving bumps on the back of the necks of his all-colored clientele.

After Leo Africanus's text, it seemed that everyone in Europe wanted to be the first white man to survive the trek across the desert and capture the gold buried at Timbuktu. Not since the desperate quest to find the mythical Ethiopian Christian king, Prester John, had Europeans so passionately sought to bridge the distance that separated them from black Africa. For two centuries, starting in the late sixteenth century, no fewer than 39 Europeans set out across the desert, all doomed to fail. Little wonder that Timbuktu became a synonym for magic and mystery in English literature. As Thackeray put it in 1829: "In Africa (a quarter of the world)/men's skins are black, their hair is crisp and curled;/And somewhere there, unknown to public view/A mighty city lies called Timbuktu!"

It was not until 1828, after the French Geographical Society had four years earlier offered a prize of 10,000 francs to the first European who could successfully navigate the perils of the Sahara, that René Caillié, an Arabic-speaking French explorer disguised as a Moroccan, finally succeeded. He found a town whose glory had faded. So much so that a 19-year-old student at Trinity College, Cambridge, Alfred Tennyson, won a university prize for a poem that compared Timbuktu with the legendary lost civilizations of Atlantis and Eldorado. ("Or is the rumour of thy Timbuctoo/A dream as frail as those of ancient time?") As Tennyson's lines suggested ("Low-built, mud wall'd, barbarian settlement"), the city was showing the effect of neglectful occupation by the Moroccans, who valued Timbuktu mainly for its position as an entrepôt to the "great salt road" that connected gold and slaves from the south with equally valuable salt that Tuareg nomads and their slaves, the Bella, mined in the bowels of the desert, 15 days by camel from Timbuktu. The conquering culture had little time for the great university. In 1591, the outsiders disbanded it and attempted to destroy its astonishing collection of books.

By 1897, writers such as Felix Dubois mocked the city: "And this is the great Timbuctoo, the metropolis of the Sudan and the Sahara, with its boasted wealth and commerce," he wrote in *Timbuctoo the Mysterious*. "This is Timbuctoo the holy, the learned, the light of the Niger, of which it was written: 'We shall one day correct the texts of our Greek and Latin classics by the manuscripts that are preserved here,' and I have not even seen one of the open-air schools which were so numerous at Jenne. These ruins, this rubbish, this wreck of a town, is this the secret of Timbuctoo the mysterious?"

I boarded the rickety German steamer *Timbuktu* at Mopti, a once-thriving outpost on the River Niger established by the French colonial government as the center of the trade in bird feathers, which were extraordinarily popular in the nineteenth-century haberdashery industry. The *Timbuktu* was a "people's boat," the floating equivalent of the crowded "mammy wagons" that are still the most popular form of public transport in West Africa. I dragged my luggage to my "first class" cabin, a dingy, dirty room with a nonflushing toilet. All night long, I awoke from feverish nightmares of crawling vermin and mosquitoes nibbling on my ever-browning body. The heat and the discomfort of my sleeping quarters were mitigated only by the splendor of the grand River Niger, surely one of the genuine wonders of the African world. Our journey on the river took three full days. Grim as it was, it was better than the only alternative: a 90-day camel caravan from North Africa due south across the Sahara.

Yes, Timbuktu has fallen on hard times, but it still calls to mind a university town, with its surprisingly wide, sand-strewn mud boulevards, lined with the stalls of dozens of Tuareg leather and silver craftsmen, its tolerance for cosmopolitan transients, its love of learning—still obvious even today. Little effort is required of

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the contemporary visitor to summon up images of scholars clustering at the marketplace, slurping the bitter-sweet brew called Malian tea, or munching on the local *pommes frites*—deep fried yams sprinkled with unprocessed desert salt and wrapped unceremoniously in greasy brown paper.

Having survived the trip down the river, I was eager to see the library at the Ahmad Baba Center, where approximately 10,000 surviving volumes from the ancient university are housed and cataloged thanks to a grant from UNESCO. But, before I could arrange that meeting, I was contacted somewhat mysteriously by a man named Abd Al-Qadin Haidara. (I don't know how it was in Caillié's time, but, when visitors arrive in Timbuktu nowadays, everyone from Tuareg traders in leather and silver to Bella beggars shows up to proffer his wares in the hopes of "liberating" a few dollars or francs.)

Haidara is a young, strikingly handsome *sharif*, which means a direct descendant of the prophet. "The prophet Mohammed himself?" I ask, sounding like an idiot and staring at Haidara's polished, ebony skin, his carefully coiffed Afro, and long, robin-egg blue robes. "Which tribe are you from?" I ask, wondering if his ancestors are Fulani or Bambara. "I said that I'm a *sharif*," he responds, pretending not to understand me. "Let's just say that the prophet had many wives," he finally relents, never acknowledging his African roots.

Just as obscure are his connections with the other leading families of the city, who collected, protected, and willed to their heirs, Haidara tells me, no fewer than 50,000 volumes they somehow managed to rescue from the fabled library. Would I care to see them?

Haidara leads me to his home, a small, airy mud-brick building. The texture of its wall is erased by the noonday sun. We turn left just off the tiny courtyard, facing north, and enter a dark, cramped room. It is full of battered metal steamer trunks and two ancient mahogany armoires. Through their glass windows, I can see dozens upon dozens of leather-bound manuscripts. The air is dense with the peppery odor of dry rot, forcing me to recoil at first and then to hold my breath for long intervals until I become accustomed to the smell and to the darkness of the room.

Though it is difficult to believe, several of Timbuktu's prominent families squirreled away portions of the library after the Moroccans ordered it destroyed. For 400 years, Arabic manuscripts, housed in leather slipcases and buried in trunks and boxes, protected from decay by the desert's dry heat, have been jealously guarded and handed down, generation to generation, in this sandy, mud-walled town of 12,000. Even major scholars of the era have yet to see them.

"What is this one about, and when was it written?" I ask Haidara over and over like a kid on a shopping spree at F.A.O. Schwarz. There, standing in Haidara's "library," a dusty storage room crowded with old metal trunks piled one on another almost to the ceiling, each packed full of books, I wonder how that shepherd felt holding the Dead Sea Scrolls, sensing the majesty of the moment, yet not possessing one clue about how to open the secrets inscribed there. Here, at the gateway of the desert, where two parallel roads end, or begin, at the edge of the Sahara's superhighway for camels, at the threshold of being where two parallel universes have been meeting for a millennium—here it was that I held in my hands the only remnants of the black African world's intellect, before the colonizers arrived, a world that Hume, at the height of the Enlightenment, claimed did not, indeed, *could* not exist.

If only the loaders at Mr. Combie Carroll's barbershop could have been there, too. •

The case against the case against pork.

ROLL OUT THE BARREL

By Jonathan Cohn

On most days, the lobby of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Washington, D.C., headquarters has a certain rarefied air. But on this Tuesday morning it is thick with the smell of greasy, grilled bacon. The aroma is appropriate, since the breakfast speaker is Republican Representative Bud Shuster of Pennsylvania, chairman of the House Transportation Committee and, his critics say, one of the most shameless promulgators of pork-barrel spending in all of Congress. The odor seems even more fitting given that the topic of Shuster's address is the Building Efficient Surface Transportation and Equity Act, the six-year, $217 billion highway-spending package about to pass Congress—and, according to these same critics, the single biggest hunk of pork Washington has seen in a decade.

The critics, of course, are absolutely right. The House

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version of BESTEA, which hit the floor this week, contains at least $18 billion in so-called "demonstration" and "high-priority" projects. Those are the congressional euphemisms for pork—public works programs of dubious merit, specific to one congressional district, designed to curry favor with its voters. And Shuster's record for bringing home the bacon is indeed legendary. BESTEA's predecessor, which passed in 1991, included $287 million for 13 projects in Shuster's central Pennsylvania district. Today, visitors can see these and other shrines to his legislative clout by driving along the newly built Interstate 99, a shimmering stretch of asphalt the state has officially christened the Bud Shuster Highway.

None of this much bothers the suits at the Chamber of Commerce, who savor every line of Shuster's pitch as if it were just so much more fat-soaked sausage from the buffet table. Money for roads—whether in Shuster's district or anybody else's—means more ways to transport goods and more work for construction companies. But, outside the friendly confines of groups like this, a relentless chorus of high-minded watchdog groups and puritanical public officials complains that pork-barrel spending wastes government money. These critics also protest the way pork becomes law in the first place, as last-minute amendments designed to bypass the hearings and debate bills normally require.

To be sure, these arguments are not exactly novel. The very term "pork barrel" is a pre-Civil War term, derived from what was then a readily understandable (but, to modern ears, rather objectionable) analogy between congressmen gobbling up appropriations and slaves grabbing at salt pork distributed from giant barrels. "By the 1870s," William Safire writes in his *Political Dictionary*, "congressmen were regularly referring to 'pork,' and the word became part of the U.S. political lexicon." Criticizing pork, meanwhile, is just as venerable a tradition. Virtually every president from Abraham Lincoln to Ronald Reagan has promised to eliminate pork from the federal budget, and so have most congressmen, much to the satisfaction of muckraking journalists and similarly high-minded voters.

But rarely have the politicians actually meant it, and even more rarely have they succeeded. Until now. Thanks to an endless parade of media exposés on government waste, and a prevailing political consensus in favor of balanced budgets, pork critics have been gaining momentum. In 1994, anti-pork fervor nearly killed President Clinton's crime bill; in 1995, the same sentiment lay behind enactment of the line-item veto, something budget-balancers had sought in vain for more than a decade. A few years ago, a handful of anti-pork legislators took to calling themselves "pork-busters." Thanks to their vigilance, says the nonprofit group Citizens Against Government Waste, the amount of pork in the budget declined by about nine percent in 1998.

The influence of pork-busters reached a new peak in 1997, when they helped defeat a preliminary attempt at BESTEA. They probably won't be able to duplicate the feat this year—Shuster has nearly 400 votes behind his new pork-laden bill, which House Budget Chairman John Kasich has called an "abomination." But pork-busters won a major public relations victory last week when four House Republicans turned on Shuster and accused him of trying to buy them off with pet projects. "I told them my vote was not for sale," said Steve Largent of Oklahoma. "Shuster bought just about everyone," David Hobson of Ohio told *The Washington Post*. Three weeks ago, Republican Senator John McCain of Arizona, Capitol Hill's most determined pork-buster, won passage of an amendment that could cut at least some of the bill's pork. President Clinton has since joined the chorus, saying he too deplores the parochial waste Shuster and his cronies added to the measure.

In the popular telling, episodes like these represent epic struggles of good versus evil—of principled fiscal discipline versus craven political self-interest—with the nation's economic health and public faith in government at stake. But this narrative, related time and again by purveyors of elite wisdom and then repeated mindlessly by everyday citizens, has it exactly backward. The pork-busters are more anti-government than anti-waste. As for pork-barrel spending, it's good for American citizens and American democracy as well. Instead of criticizing it, we should be celebrating it, in all of its gluttonous glory.

Nearly a week has passed since Shuster made his appearance before the Chamber of Commerce, and now it is the pork-busters' turn to be making headlines. In what has become an annual rite of the budget process, Citizens Against Government Waste is staging a press conference near Capitol Hill to release its compilation of pork in the 1997 federal budget—a 40-page, pink-covered booklet it calls the "Pig Book." (Actually, the pocket-sized, 40-page version is just a summary of the unabridged "Pig Book," which weighs in at a hefty 170 pages, in single-sided, legal-sized computer printouts.)

CAGW has been fighting this fight for more than a decade, and its steady stream of propaganda, reports, and testimony is in no small part responsible for pork-busting's Beltway resonance. Republican Representative Christopher Cox calls CAGW "the premier waste-fighting organization in America"; the 1995–1996 Congress sought CAGW testimony 20 times. The interest in today's press conference—attended by more than 60 reporters and a dozen television crews—is testimony to the group's high esteem among the Washington press corps, although it doesn't hurt that CAGW has also provided the TV crews with a good photo opportunity.

Like many press conferences in this city, this one features several members of Congress, including McCain and Democratic Senator Russell Feingold. Unlike many press conferences in this city, this one also features a man dressed in a bright pink pig's suit, rubber pig masks free for the media to take, plus a live, charcoal-gray potbellied pig named Porky. For the duration of the event, Porky does little except scarf down some vegetable shreds. But the beast's mere presence gets a few laughs,

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which is more than can be said for the puns that CAGW's president, Tom Schatz, makes as he rattles off the recipients of this year's "Oinker Awards."

Senator Daniel Inouye of Hawaii secured $127,000 in funding for research on edible seaweed; for this and other appropriations, Schatz says, Inouye (who is of Japanese ancestry) wins "The Sushi Slush Fund Award." Senator Ted Stevens of Alaska sponsored $100,000 for a project called Ship Creek, so he gets "The Up Ship's Creek Award." (Stevens is a double winner: for his other pork, totaling some $477 million since 1991, CAGW also presents him with "The Half Baked Alaska Award.") The Pentagon budget included $3 million for an observatory in South America: "It's supposed to peer back millions of years in time," Schatz says, his deadpan poker face now giving way to a smarmy, half-cocked smile. "Maybe they're looking for a balanced budget." This dubious-sounding project Schatz dubs "The Black Hole Award." And on. And on.

You might think cornball humor like this would earn CAGW the disdain of the famously cynical Washington press corps. But, when Schatz is done, and the question-and-answer period begins, the reporters display barely any skepticism. Instead, that evening, and during the following days, they will heap gobs of attention on the group. They don't flatter or endorse the organization per se, but the coverage shares a common assumption that the group's findings are evidence of political malfeasance. CNN, for example, will use the "Pig Book"'s release as a peg for stories bemoaning the persistence of pork in the federal budget. A story out of Knight Ridder's Washington bureau, which will run in nearly a dozen of the chain's newspapers, basically recapitulates the report. And all this comes on the heels of a front-page *Wall Street Journal* feature—sparked by a similar report from the Tax Foundation—highlighting the profligate pork barreling of the Senate majority leader, Trent Lott of Mississippi. Its headline: "MISSISSIPPI'S SENATORS CONTINUE A TRADITION: GETTING FEDERAL MONEY."

This is typical. Normally jaded Washingtonians, journalists especially, tend to view pork-busters not as ideologues but as politically disinterested watchdogs. Television producers, in particular, regularly summon CAGW experts to validate stories for such waste-focused segments as NBC's "The Fleecing of America" and ABC's "Your Money, Your Choice." While this image has a basis in reality—CAGW truly goes after pork-barreling Republicans with the same fervor it pursues Democrats—it is also a product of the organization's concerted attempt to wrap itself in the flag of nonpartisanship. "No matter how you slice it, pork is always on the menu in the halls of Congress," Schatz said at the press conference. "Some members of Congress simply couldn't resist the lure of easy money and putting partisan political interests over the best interest of taxpayers."

But it's not as if the pork-busters have no partisan or ideological agenda of their own. Some, like the CATO Institute, are explicit about their anti-government predisposition. CAGW is a little more cagey, but it remains true to the spirit of its past chairman, perennial right-wing Republican candidate Alan Keyes, as well as its cofounder, J. Peter Grace, who headed President Reagan's 1984 commission on government waste and whose antipathy to government in general was widely known. "The government is the worst bunch of stupid jerks you've ever run into in your life," he said once at a CAGW fund-raising dinner. "These people just want to spend money, money, money all the time."

That is, of course, a forgivable overstatement of a plausible argument. But it is also an overtly ideological one, and it calls into question the group's reliability when it comes to making delicate distinctions about what is truly wasteful. After all, CAGW is not just against pork, but against much of what the mainstream conservative movement considers bad or overly intrusive public policy—which encompasses an awful lot. In 1995, CAGW was not bashful about embracing the Contract With America, whose expansive definition of waste included many regulatory programs Americans deem quite worthwhile. "Taxpayers ... demonstrated in two consecutive elections of a Republican Congress that the Washington establishment at its peril ignores the taxpayers' voice," the group's annual report boasts. "CAGW stood shoulder to shoulder with the reformers and enjoyed a sense of accomplishment at this burst of energy from revitalized taxpayers." CAGW's contributor list, not surprisingly, reads like a who's who of conservative interests, from Philip Morris Companies Inc. to the Columbia/HCA Healthcare Foundation Inc.

To be sure, CAGW is not the only Beltway organization whose partisan allegiances belie its nonprofit, nonpartisan status. At least a dozen other groups on both the left and the right do the exact same thing. Anyway, the fact that an argument may be ideologically motivated hardly means it's wrong.

But that doesn't mean it's right, either. Listen closely the next time some smug good-government type starts criticizing pork: it's an awful lot of fuss over what is, in fact, a very small amount of money. In the "Pig Book," for example, CAGW claims last year's budget included pork worth about $13.2 billion—or, as a pork-buster would say, "$13.2 billion!" Yes, you could feed quite a few hungry people with that much money, or you could give a bigger tax cut. But it's less than one percent of the federal budget.

And it's not even clear that all of the $13.2 billion of waste is really, well, waste. A good chunk of CAGW's $13.2 billion in pork comes from a few dozen big-ticket items, costing tens of millions of dollars each, scattered through various appropriations measures, particularly the Pentagon's. Among the programs: research of a space-based laser ($90 million), transportation improvements in Utah ($14 million), and military construction in Montana ($32 million).

But it's hardly self-evident that these all constitute waste, as the pork-busters suggest. At least some national security experts believe the space-based laser is a necessary defense against rogue nations that might get their

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hands on nuclear missiles. A lot of that Utah money is to help Salt Lake City prepare for Olympic traffic. And, if you've ever been to Montana, you know that there are a lot of military bases scattered across that vast state—which means a lot of soldiers who need buildings in which to live, eat, and work. In other words, all of these serve some credible purpose.

The wastefulness of the smaller items is similarly open to interpretation. Remember Senator Inouye's "Sushi Slush Fund Award"—the $127,000 for research on edible seaweed in Hawaii? It turns out that aquaculture is an emerging industry in Hawaii and that edible seaweed—known locally as "limu," "ogo," or "sea sprouts"—is "rich in complex carbohydrates and protein and low in calories," according to the *Honolulu Advertiser*. "It's a good source of vitamin A, calcium, and potassium, too."

Yes, the federal government is paying $3 million for a telescope in South America. But it has to, because the telescope is part of a U.S. effort to explore the southern hemisphere sky—which, of course, is only visible from the southern hemisphere. Although the telescope will be located in Chile, it will be operated remotely from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. "When completed, the telescope will hold tremendous promise for scientists and the federal government," the university chancellor said when Republican Senator Lauch Faircloth of North Carolina announced the appropriation. "We at the university also have high hopes for what the project will mean for the North Carolina economy as well as for students of all ages—on this campus, across our state, and beyond."

And Senator Stevens's "Up Ship's Creek Award"? The Ship Creek water project was part of a bill authorizing studies of environmental cleanup across the country. Some $100,000 went to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to assess the impact of development on Ship Creek, which is Anchorage's primary source of freshwater. Ironically, according to the Corps of Engineers, the study is exploring not only what kind of environmental precautions are necessary, but whether the federal government really has to pay for them, and whether local private entities might be convinced to foot part of the bill. In other words, one objective of the Ship Creek appropriation was to reduce government waste.

You could argue, as pork-busters do, that, while projects like these may serve some positive function in society—perhaps even deserving of government money—they should not be on the federal dime. Let the Hawaiians pay for their own calcium-rich dinners! Let Alaskans foot the bill for their own water study! But there's a respectable argument that sometimes parochial needs are in fact a legitimate federal interest, particularly when it involves things like pollution and commerce that cross state lines.

Certainly, that's the way a lot of people outside of Washington understand it. Last month, while the national media was busy flogging unthrifty lawmakers, several local newspapers rose to their defense. "We elect people to Congress not only to see to the nation's defense and keep the currency sound but also to bring home some pork," editorialized *The Fort Worth Star-Telegram*. "Pork can mean local jobs, local beautification, local pride, etc." The *Dayton Daily News* defended one project, a museum on the history of flight, that appeared on CAGW's hit list: "It is at the heart of a community effort that has been painstakingly nurtured for years by all manner of Daytonians. It combines the legitimate national purpose of recognizing the history of flight with the top-priority local purpose of getting Dayton recognized as a center of the history of flight." Other papers were more critical: they wanted to know why their congressmen hadn't brought home *more* bacon. "Alaskans aren't going to sit still for being No. 2 for long," *Anchorage Daily News* columnist Mike Doogan wrote in a spirited defense of pork. "We need the money. And we have our pride."

This is not to say that all or even most of what gets called pork is defensible on its own terms. (Did Bedford County, Pennsylvania, which happens to be smack in the middle of Shuster's rural district, really need a new airport when there were two others nearby?) Nor is it to say that the local interest in getting federal money should always trump the national interest in balancing the budget and distributing the federal largesse fairly. (Couldn't the state of Pennsylvania have paid for the Bedford County airport instead?) Nor is it even to say that local interests defending pork aren't being incredibly hypocritical—no one thinks an appropriation is pork when it's his.

No, the point is simply that you can't call something waste just because it makes a clever pun. "From what we can tell," says John Raffetto, communications director for the Senate Transportation Committee, "CAGW does no research to determine what purpose the project serves other than to flip through the pages of the bill and find projects that sound funny. If it sounds funny, that's pork. I have not heard from any member's office that has told me they've received a call from CAGW to ask what purpose that project has served."

Pork-busters concede they lack the time or resources to investigate items thoroughly. "Some may be worthy of consideration," says CAGW media director Jim Campi. "Our concern is that, if the projects went through the process the way they were supposed to, there would be a [better] opportunity to judge them on their merits."

This is the same argument that most animates McCain, Feingold, and other pork-busting lawmakers. But what constitutes a fair appropriations process? CAGW would have everyone believe that a project is pork if it is "not requested by the president" or if it "greatly exceeds the president's budget request or the previous year's funding." Huh? The whole point of the appropriations process is to give Congress a chance to make independent judgments about spending priorities. Particularly when Republicans control one branch of government and Democrats the other—as is the case today—differences will exist. The Republican Congress

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used to routinely declare the president's budget "dead on arrival." Did this mean the entire congressional budget was pork?

Two other criteria for defining pork are equally shaky. Invoking the familiar pork-busting wisdom, CAGW says a program is pork if it was "not specifically authorized"—meaning it wasn't in the original budget which contains general spending limits, but rather added on as part of the subsequent appropriations process, in which money is specifically allocated to each item. But the rationale for a separate budget and appropriations process is to allow Congress (and, for that matter, the president) an opportunity to change their minds about smaller items, as long as they stay within the broad guidelines of the budget agreement. CAGW also damns any projects "requested by only one chamber of Congress." But, just as Congress can disagree with the president over a project's merit, so the House can disagree with the Senate—that's the reason the architects of the Constitution created two houses in the first place. (Also, keep in mind that one reason the Senate doesn't propose as much pork is that senators—wary of getting stung in the national press for lacking frugality—will often wait to see how much pork the House passes. That way, they end up with the best of both worlds: they can quietly tell supporters that they backed the measure without ever incurring the wrath of pork-busting watchdogs.)

Make no mistake, though: Many pork-barrellers are trying to evade the scrutiny bills get when they move through the normal appropriations process. They stick in small bits of pork after hearings end because they know that nobody is going to vote against a multibillion-dollar bill just because it has a few million dollars of pork tucked in. And they can do so safe in the knowledge that, because there's very little in the way of a paper trail, they will not suffer any public consequences—unless, of course, a watchdog group or enthusiastic reporter manages to find out.

Pork-busters call this strategy sleazy, and it is. But remember, the whole point of our Constitution is to harness mankind's corrupt tendencies and channel them in constructive directions. In an oft-quoted passage of *The Federalist Number 51*, James Madison wrote, "if men were angels, no government would be necessary," and "the private interest of every individual may be a sentinel over the public rights." The Founders believed that sometimes local interests should trump national interests because they recognized it was a way to keep federal power in check. It's true this process lends itself to a skewed distribution of benefits, with disproportionate shares going to powerful lawmakers. But, again, pork is such a small portion of the budget that "equalizing" its distribution would mean only modest funding changes here and there.

Which brings us to the final defense of pork, one Madison would certainly endorse. Even if every single pork-barrel project really were a complete waste of federal money, pork still represents a very cheap way to keep our sputtering legislative process from grinding to a halt. In effect, pork is like putting oil in your car engine: it lubricates the parts and keeps friction to a minimum. This is particularly true when you are talking about controversial measures. "Buying off potential coalition members with spending programs they favor is exactly what the Founders not only expected, but practiced," political scientist James Q. Wilson has argued. He has also written: "If you agree with Madison, you believe in pork."

Think of the NAFTA battle in 1993. Contentious to the bitter end, the fate of the agreement ultimately fell on the shoulders of a handful of congressmen, all of whom privately supported it but feared the political backlash if they voted for it. Clinton gave each of them a little pork—for example, a development bank in border states that ostensibly would provide start-up money for entrepreneurs who had lost jobs because of NAFTA. The bank was just another way to pump some federal money into these districts, but that was the whole point. Thanks to that money, NAFTA became politically viable; these lawmakers could tell their constituents, plausibly and truthfully, that there was something in it for their districts.

To take a more current example, just look at BESTEA. U.S. transportation infrastructure is famously inadequate; the Department of Transportation says unsafe roads cause 30 percent of all traffic fatalities. But, when fiscal conservatives questioned the pork in the original BESTEA last year, the measure failed, forcing Congress to pass an emergency extension. This year, a more permanent, six-year version will likely pass, largely because the appearance of a budget surplus has tipped the scales just enough so that the pork seems tolerable. As John W. Ellwood and Eric M. Patashnik wrote in *The Public Interest* several years ago (in what was the best defense of pork in recent memory): "Favoring legislators with small gifts for their districts in order to achieve great things for the nation is an act not of sin but of statesmanship."

Last week, of course, BESTEA's high pork content had fiscal conservatives downright apoplectic. "Frankly, this bill really is a hog," Kasich said. "It is way over the top." But, without the pork, there might be no highway bill at all. As one highway lobbyist told *National Journal* last year, "The projects are the glue that's going to hold the damn thing together." A former transportation official said: "I've always taken the point of view that every business has some overhead. If that's what it costs to get a significant or a good highway bill, it's worth the price." Kasich would surely be aghast at such logic, but someday he and other fiscal conservatives might find it useful for their own purposes. Remember, they are the ones who say that balancing the budget will likely be impossible without severe and politically risky reforms of entitlements like Medicare. When the time comes to make those tough choices—and they need to pry a few extra votes from the opposition—you can bet they will gladly trade a little pork for *their* greater cause. They might feel guilty about it, but they shouldn't. Pork is good. Pork is virtuous. Pork is the American way. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Wag the Tale

A landmark scene in the chronicle of American political film is in *The Candidate* (1972). Robert Redford, as a senatorial candidate being swirled along in the bustle and gab, goes to a TV studio to film a campaign ad. As the camera rolls and he looks at the teleprompter, he bursts into hysterical laughter. They try again; more laughter. After a few more attempts and more laughter, they give up. The candidate's increasing sense of carnival hooey is simply too much for him.

Campaigning had been linked with blatant showbiz as far back as *The Phantom President* (1932), in which an amiable song-and-dance man, a look-alike of a frosty presidential candidate, replaces the latter and wins the election. (George M. Cohan played both roles.) But *The Candidate* firmly announced that backstage was now on stage. Of course political pictures full of soppy pieties still get made, but at least there is much wider admission in the film world that campaigning is a species of marketing, frenzied, plastered over with salesman's rictus.

Here now, to no one's surprise, is **Primary Colors** (Universal), fully subscribed to the strategy of campaign-as-carnival and also fully accepting the widened stage for that carnival. The candidate's sex life, insofar as it is revealed, is now part of the show. Joe Klein, still billed here as Anonymous, wrote the novel (unread by me). Elaine May wrote the screenplay, and her former comedy partner, Mike Nichols, directed. The two leading characters are called Jack and Susan Stanton, not Bill and Hillary Clinton, if it matters. The members of the campaign staff, in the 1992 primary fight depicted here, are recognizable stand-ins for Clinton's staff. The result is glib, often funny, sometimes bumpy, and ultimately depressing.

We might expect, because of the Nichols-May combination, that *Primary Colors* is satire. It isn't. Satire exaggerates, in the hope that caricature will spur improvement. The grim point of *Primary Colors* is that it has no such hope: it depicts a condition. It says, in effect, as did *The War Room*, the documentary of a Clinton campaign, that this now is the way things are and they will probably get more so. Not all candidates are, or will be, as sexually troublesome as Jack Stanton, and in a certain sour way, that may possibly be regrettable; but in any case that is not the prime element. What's important, what's somber, is that the original purpose of elections is getting ridiculously remote.

Obviously, elections were never Parnassian. Scandal and corruption have always been part of campaigning in America (which has no monopoly on them). But just as acceptable language has broadened—the people in this film are as blue-mouthed as most people in current film, a fact that no one even mentions any more—so has the texture of politics. Certainly, sepulchres used to be whitened; now they are opened. But in our eagerness to be frank, unhypocritical, the focus seems to have shifted from politics to frankness.

The new-old saw is that TV has ruined the electoral process. TV certainly helped to damage it, but so has the entire shaping of public life on showbiz models. Polls, much like the audience polls conducted by film studios, determine policy. Lives of politicians are scrutinized as the possible fodder of fan magazines and supermarket tabloids. Everyone before the public, from rock star to president, is mulch for the media Mixmaster. Anyone who still thinks that politics ought to be a matter of thought and principle is called (in this film, anyway) a TB, a True Believer—that is, a naïf who will wise up if you just give him time.

If we wonder why half the eligible voters in this country don't vote in national elections, perhaps it's because many people can't see campaigns as more than entertainment. Which, largely, they are. Perhaps it would help the voter turnout if the winner got an Oscar as well as an office.

So the basic negative news about *Primary Colors* is that it is credible. It was directed by a man whose last screenwork was his (masterly) performance in Wallace Shawn's *The Designated Mourner*, a writhing elegy for humane politics and an aspiring society. The abutment of that film and this one couldn't have been planned, but it's a real collision.

Sheerly as film, *Primary Colors* generally sizzles. May's screenplay is built of arcs, not cumulation—a crisis arises and is handled, then another and another—but the arcs do soar and descend with some wit and flash. Nichols understands ice-skating: he keeps the film skimming along so briskly that we don't crack the

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Fireworks. *A Japanese whirlwind named Takeshi Kitano writes, directs and stars in this tale of Tokyo detectives. Just enough like American models to make its Asian interpretation fascinating. (Reviewed 4/6/98)* **Post Coitum.** *Passion explodes the life of a fortyish Parisian married woman. Written and directed by Brigitte Roüan who plays the leading role with fire and wit and pathos. (3/30/98)* **Taste of Cherry.** *More beautiful work from the Iranian master, Abbas Kiarostami. As before, he dares to meditate on such subjects as life and death and reality. (4/13/98)* **Wag the Dog.** *A sex scandal in the White House creates a national crisis. Incredible you say? Well, anyway, it's largely funny. (2/2/98)* **—SK**

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surface—for instance, we never have a chance to ponder how the solution to every problem is so readily accessible.

John Travolta, padded a bit, plays Jack and gives him as much of Bill as he can, including the sincerity. He even manages to suggest the imminence of the sore throat that always seems to be threatening Bill. An inspired bit of casting and the most accomplished performance is Emma Thompson as Susan. Her ease with the American accent was predictable; so, too, might have been the vitality with which she acts. She fills the part to the brim. (There might have been more to fill if the script had mentioned that Susan is a lawyer, as Hillary is. The character would have been a bit richer.)

The whole story is told, more and sometimes less, from the view of a young black man, bright and serious, who is dragooned into Jack's army because they need a black person on staff and he's the grandson of a distinguished black politician. Adrian Lester, like Thompson a Brit, gives the young man a pleasant presence, as he uneasily accommodates himself to an inside view of campaigning. In the penultimate scene he tells Jack that he has to quit, that he can no longer endure all the garbage, and Jack gives him the usual response: Isn't it worthwhile to elect an imperfect man of good intent, even if by imperfect means, so that his intent can operate? The young man clearly accepts this bit of *realpolitik* because he is present at Jack's inaugural ball, which closes the film.

Kathy Bates has the Show Part as a seasoned campaign strategist, lately recovered from a mental relapse, who spumes with vigor and savvy. She is also frankly lesbian. Bates is juicy enough, but the woman has so patently been designed as the Role You Remember that, through no fault of the performer, she gets egregiously theatrical.

Primary Colors confirms—yet again—the widened scope of what is held to be public in public lives, the latter-day claim that reticence is mendacity, the fever with which the media must stuff stuff stuff the audience's maw. The ceremony of innocence, despite Yeats, may not yet be drowned, but as we preen ourselves on our sophistication, we can hear it gurgle. •

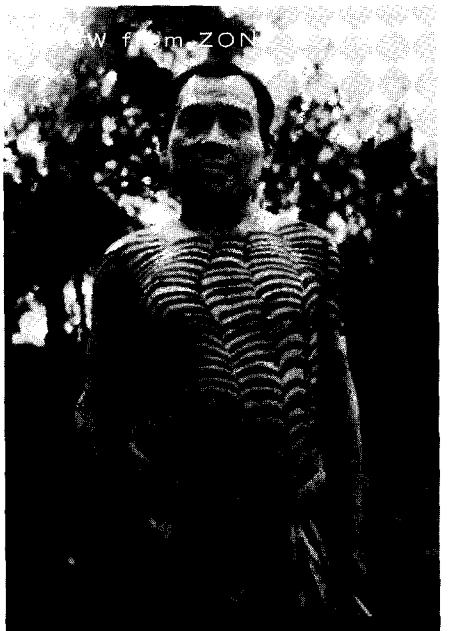
Jed Perl on Art

Death and Realism

Realism, a clarion call of radical utopian empiricism for artists in the nineteenth century, suggests very different ambitions today. For Gabriel Laderman, whose *Dance of Death* is the most exciting new figure composition to be exhibited in New York in many years, realism is melancholy and nostalgic; as he constructs a complicated illusionistic image, Laderman is also spinning a haunted, hyperbolic mood. For Chuck Close, whose large portraits, many of art world notables, are currently the subject of a retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art, realism is a puzzle hidden in a photograph, which he grids off and elaborates by means of painting techniques that are deliberately abstruse.

Laderman and Close are intent about the details; but in their very different ways they are reaching for effects that have less to do with clarification than with complication. They labor to create ambiguous appearances. Laderman's figures have the doll-like mystery of Japanese *bunraku* puppets. Close gives faces an unnervingly fractured look. I do not want to create an equivalence between the work of these two men, because I like Laderman's a great deal and Close's not at all; but both painters give the figure an anxious, preoccupied aura. Their work is pervaded by a feeling that reality is the shadow kingdom of twentieth-century art.

Most people will agree that important contemporary art does not have to be abstract. Still, whenever impressions of the world around us get into the picture, we are forced to confront one of the great myths of modern art, which is that realism has died. This myth has many versions, some of which are contradictory; and nobody will ever get to the bottom of the story until they understand that realism is an elusive idea. It is more likely to change shape or to play hide-and-seek than to die. Art terminology, which is like alphabet soup, can confuse matters plenty, because it is easy to make too much of the differences between, say, the realism of 1850 and the naturalism of 1870. But even leaving aside the mismatch between what happens in a painting and how it is described, you



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Courtesy Tatistcheff Gallery

GABRIEL LADERMAN, *DANCE OF DEATH*, 1995-96

could still say that artists have spent the past 150 years pondering the question "What is realism?"

"The title of Realist was thrust upon me," Courbet announced in 1855; and although he embraced the title as his destiny, he was such a boldly adventuresome artist that he was exploding the definitions even before they were fully formed. Courbet's scintillatingly experimental use of pigment and palette knife, especially in his later landscapes, dematerializes nature in favor of a poetry of paint, and in so doing it leads straight into abstract art. As for Courbet's thematic obsessions—with sleep, with childhood—they make him the granddaddy of the Surrealists.

In a rapturous essay about Courbet, De Chirico announced that "Courbet, who felt more profoundly than Delacroix the sense of reality, is for this very reason more poetic and romantic." Observations such as this can be dismissed as little more than critical play, except that sublime visual play was what the Cubists, who admired Courbet and were influenced by De Chirico, used to turn reality on its head. Pretty soon Mondrian was explaining that abstraction was "the true vision of reality." And after all these themes and variations, there is no surprise in hearing Giacometti remark, to the critic Pierre Schneider during a visit to the Louvre, that realism is "balderdash."

A contemporary realist is under no obligation to grapple with this paradoxical history, but the artists who are regarded as bellwethers tend to. Chuck Close, who is 57, would not have a retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art if it were not believed that he has brought off an elaborate synthesis of naturalistic imagery and minimalist-conceptualist principles. And Gabriel Laderman's strong underground reputation is fueled by a sense that, even when the work of this 68-year-old painter isn't totally successful, he is wrestling with ways to give naturalistic form a late-twentieth-century pulse. In interviews, Close tends to steer clear of the realist label, which is the last thing you need if you're hoping to establish a blue-chip New York reputation. As it happens, though, Close and Laderman were both included in the show that first brought the return of realism into a major museum, the Whitney's "22 Realists" in 1970. While Close and Laderman have lately been incorporating loosened-up painterly elements and higher-keyed color into their work, they both started out as sharp-focus, tonally conservative painters, and they are still concerned with the dramatic power of illusionistic effects.

Sharp-focus is often regarded as the acid test for contemporary realism, no doubt because naturalistic detail can play such tricks with the kind of paint-as-paint literalness that is celebrated in some classic abstract art. Yet only an artistic reactionary can overlook the strange fact that realism begat abstraction. Indeed, that process occurs, to one degree or another, in every representational painting that deserves a serious look. When I see some of Fairfield Porter's brushily worked yet acutely observed landscapes, or Louisa Matthiasdottir's

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still lifes, in which the almost Constructivist compositions somehow add to the astonishing credibility, I know that the freestanding power of a brushstroke is a direct response to what the artist has experienced in the world. Painters who want to catch all the lights and shades of nature will be working against the fundamental flatness of a canvas, but the urge to play against the plane is as old as art itself. There is every reason to believe that realism is as much about the essence of painting as abstraction.

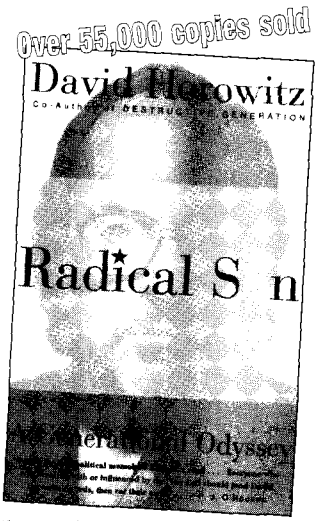
But if abstraction is born, does realism die? And can abstraction and realism live together? These are the questions that Laderman is confronting in his *Dance of Death*. In his show at Tatistcheff this past fall, the majority of the paintings were of women, clothed or nude, in unprepossessing interiors. Some of these canvases contained provocative or convincing passages, and there were a couple of beautifully painted heads, but I don't find that Laderman has the intuitive feeling for paint that is required to bring these moody psychological portraits to life. In the middle of this show, however, there was *Dance of Death*, a hugely rich and complex vision that Laderman has brought off with dazzling force and assurance. Laderman is an artist who comes into his own when he is pushing himself to the limit. Compressing an elaborate choreography of seven figures into a big space, he not only fills up his subject, he also breaks the bounds of the subject, until *Dance of Death* becomes a reflection on what painting can and cannot do right now.

This isn't the first time that Laderman has done a painting about death. Indeed, his best figure compositions always seem to be about dying. In 1984 there was *Murder and Its Consequences*, and in 1984-85, *House of Death and Life*. These multipanel paintings were made up of beautifully plotted, brilliantly juxtaposed episodes. Now, by merging a complex narrative into a single allegorical moment, Laderman has deepened the dynamics. In *Dance of Death*, the life-against-death theme is fueled by the painter's hard-won ability to invent fully dimensional figures. This large picture—it is seven-and-a-half feet wide—is a stylistic daredevil act, a nerve-jangling combination of sharp-focus realism, impastoed paint, high-pitched expressionist color, and angled neo-Cubist forms. Laderman's burnt reds, lemony yellows, and brownish purples lack the inevitability of great color, but they create the mood that he needs. The color launches some of the most inventive figure painting of the past 20 or 30 years. Laderman seems to be saying that if realism lives,

David Horowitz's memoir of the '60s, *Radical Son*, tells many truths we do not wish to believe. It is a searing book, an unflinching book and deeply honest.

A reader may not come to Horowitz's conclusions about politics present. But about politics past he is undeniable.

—Martin Peretz
Editor-in-Chief
The New Republic



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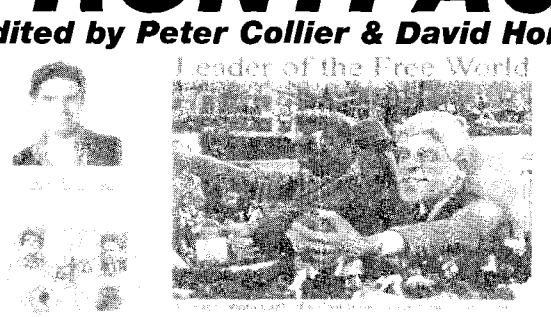

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life goes on. And realism does live, and life does go on.

In this perfervid meditation on lovers cut down in their prime, a young man and woman, who should be dancing together, are instead partnered by two skull-topped stick figures. Laderman's dreamily interiorized vision of Death has little to do with the figure in Holbein's famous woodcuts. Holbein's Death liked to sneak up on men and women as they went about the ordinary business of their lives; those unannounced appearances, sparing neither the humblest nor the mightiest of men, were a reminder of the vanity of all human desires. Laderman's death figure, by contrast, is almost passive; it is just a few pieces of wood hinged together and attached to a skull.

This Reaper doesn't quite have the power to snatch people away, or to lead them in the meandering medieval line-dance that inspired the most famous image in Bergman's *The Seventh Seal.* Laderman's young man and woman are evenly matched with their strange partner. They join with Death in an intimate, almost waltz-like dance. They are getting to know Death. This is closer to a nineteenth-century romantic conception of the Dance of Death, except that in place of the fascinating dark stranger of romantic ballet, there is an almost Constructivist stick figure. Laderman has invented a Bauhaus death figure: it is, come to think of it, an image of the figure in an age of abstraction.

Dance of Death is set in a not-quite-inside-not-quite-outside space that is just right for the elaborately compressed narrative construction that fills the painting. We begin with the two women, seated at a table, each sunk deep in her own thoughts. They seem to be sitting in the privacy of their home; but Laderman is presenting inside and outside as interpenetrating states, and so this interior is also an exterior, with a glimpse of yellowish, desert-like landscape to the left and, behind the table, a wall punctuated by a window that reveals a darkened interior. The woman at right, in the red dress, with her head leaning on her hand, suggests the contemplative saints of seventeenth-century paintings, and those reverberations jibe with Laderman's sense of overlapping and triangulating relationships. The woman in red appears again, behind the table, hands in the air, as if leading the dance. And the young woman, dancing with Death all the way to the right, reappears once, maybe twice, for we see what must be the same figure, now naked, walking off into the yellow landscape, and, perhaps again, peering through the window of Death's house, where the table reappears, now holding a skull.

In the darkened room, the dance is over. But Laderman is also telling us that the dance goes on. The entire composition, with its doubled figures and its enigmatic locales, has a cyclical rhythm. We feel that everything that we are seeing might have been dreamed up by one of the participants. And their experiences hold us. Laderman knows how to give dramatic point to each clenched fist, outstretched arm, and furrowed brow. The nightmare of the dance is reflected in seven pairs of sadly averted eyes.

Laderman understands that a realist's power to disturb has much to do with how unnatural naturalism feels to sophisticated gallerygoers. And that is only one of the conundrums that he is addressing. By presenting painting as a compelling vehicle for meditations on death, Laderman is turning on its head the idea that painting is on its deathbed. *Dance of Death* might be taken as a counterallegory, an argument against those who believe that what has really happened in the past 50 years is that reality has demolished painting. By that logic, Duchamp's urinal was the ultimate realist statement, a time bomb that had been ticking since Caravaggio painted his down and dirty saints; and the true heirs to Caravaggio and Courbet have been Edward Kienholz, in his sensationalist full-scale reconstructions of flop houses and sleazy bars, and Bruce Naunan, in some of his videos of torture sessions and angry couples. This leaves painters and sculptors who still think of themselves as realists in the odd position of trying to set time back on the time bomb, which is perhaps what gives some of their work its strange, twilight-zone fascination.

This winter, Helen Miranda Wilson, who is a generation younger than Laderman, exhibited nearly two dozen small skyscapes at the Jason McCoy gallery, and her precise renderings of what she sees when she looks up to the heavens, with their great variety of cloud formations and daylit and nighttime skies, give a slowed-down, hallucinatory power to fleeting effects. In this fascinating show—the best work that she has ever done—Wilson creates her own eerily marmoreal impressionism, a verisimilitude so divorced from earthbound experience that it becomes enchantingly abstract. And a completely different kind of gravity, but also imbued with an out-of-time realist feeling, held me in some of Robert Taplin's figure sculptures, which were at Trans Hudson in the fall. There are problems with Taplin's work, but at his best (particularly in one of the seated male figures) his modeling is heartfelt, toughminded, lucid. Taplin brings a great rhythmic fervor to the representation of the ordinary. Looking at his depiction of the creases and folds of a man's shirt, I begin to feel the very weight of life's troubles in these exact renderings of rumpled surfaces.

Realists need to know the idiosyncratic power of detail. Artists such as Taplin, Wilson, and Laderman will emphasize the little things in ways that play funny tricks with scale and give the work an absolutely modern tilt. The choices about the degree and the complexity of articulation are what give their work its openness, its life. And it is precisely this life that tends to get lost when painters depend too much on photographs. A photographic model can give a painted image a sensationalist all-in-oneness, as is the case in Anselm Kiefer's new paintings of brickwork structures in India, which were at Gagosian this winter. Kiefer's jazzily overwrought painterly surfaces give these huge compositions a personal impact. When I have looked at this photo-derived work for a while, however, I find it difficult to avoid the conclusion that an artist who takes the basic relationships and values of a painting from a photograph has lost his freedom to choose.

Painters who depend on photographs are admitting that all the time bombs have gone off. They have turned a painter's sneaking-up-on-you revelations into a snap-of-the-shutter fact. And this flat-out, no-illusions-left approach is probably what people admire in Chuck Close's work. Basically, Close is a realist for gallerygoers who hate realism, and what a fashionably paradoxical position that is.

Close seems to give realism a tough, analytical look. His work is labor-intensive, but conceptually it is lazy. His billboard-scale portraits have a sideshow fascination. He makes something that looks like a face out of fingerprints or funny little circular marks, which is on the order of making a model of Manhattan out of matchsticks. These paintings are not about people, they are about what Close does with photographs of people. Close shows technical know-how, but this is different from technique. In an effort to provide this work with a bit of historical context, The Museum of Modern Art has given museumgoers an opportunity to see, before they enter the show, a self-portrait by Alex Katz and a double nude by Philip Pearlstein. Neither of those canvases is a great work of art, but they were the last paintings with which I could connect at all, until I had made my way through the Chuck Close sensory-deprivation experience and laid eyes on them again.

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The portraits that Close began to do in the late '60s are the work of an artist who has no sensibility and is proud of it. Once Close has blown up a photograph, to be sure, he still has to decide how many fingerprints he will use to describe a particular feature, or what kind of bright paint he will use to indicate the color in a particular area of the photograph. Basically, though, all Close's decision-making is boxed in. The mug shots on which he has based his canvases for the past quarter of a century dictate all the shapes and all the tonal relationships with which he will be working during the months that he is painting. And the grid that he so often clamps over the photograph gives the structure a Draconian inevitability. There is nothing wrong with an artist using a photograph to get his imagination going (Vuillard did); and the grid can be a terrific starting point for rhythmic invention. But Close doesn't use the photograph and the grid as jumping-off points. He uses them as mazes, and he is the rat running through the maze.

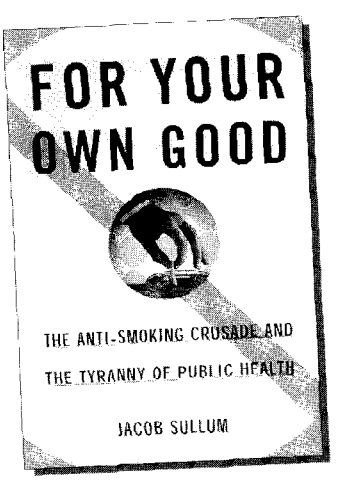
"I still make art the old-fashioned way, one stroke at a time, all by myself," Close comments in an interview with Robert Storr, the Curator in the Department of Painting and Sculpture at MoMA who organized the show. Well, so what? There has always been plenty of boring art produced in "the old-fashioned way." So Close is an old-fashioned rat running through a new-fangled maze. This work is highfalutin paint-by-numbers. It's not about grids; it's about gridlock. Close's recent paintings, which fill the last room of the show, have a heated-up look that may get some museumgoers excited. He has given these more tightly cropped images a chic improvisational look, but in a few years they are going to look as much like period pieces as the airbrushed horrors from the '60s with which the show begins. It's all just piecework, Close's homegrown assembly-line product. His coolness isn't interestingly matter-of-fact; it's deadeningly mechanized. The photograph is always a photograph. The grid is always a grid. Every one of these portraits has a dissociated feel. But for museumgoers who have spent decades training themselves to accept the latest hooey, dissociation may be the only experience left.

A Museum of Modern Art retrospective is the ultimate accolade that a living artist can receive. Some of the Modern's recent choices, such as Cy Twombly and Robert Ryman, suggest an interest in artists who present the logical conclusion of a dominant twentieth-century trend, who show modern art going to extremes. But the museum is also interested in artists who are synthesizers, and in this category I would place Frank Stella and Jasper Johns, along with Chuck Close. The work of each of these painters is in some way seen as bringing order to contemporary art's disputed claims and contested definitions. They make bold yet neat equations about where modern art is now. Chuck Close's recent work, in which photography, painterly realism, and minimalist abstraction are all wrapped up in a celebrity portrait package, tells you a lot about the Museum of Modern Art's agenda.

The curators at the Modern like to emphasize the eccentric, go-it-alone side of Close's portraitist-in-an-age-of-abstraction status. Yet Close also comes across as a mediator, a consensus builder. His work is all abstract-meets-realist gambits. And that makes a perfect fit with a museum that, though committed to the idea that modern art moves inexorably toward abstraction, can hardly ignore the stubborn persistence of realism. The Modern habitually treats such work as a quirk, a divertimento—as bread and circuses, and fundamentally unserious.

When Close grids up his faces, the curators at the Modern feel that realism is at last getting serious. Sophisticates like to see faces frozen, blown-up, digitalized, caged. If they must have realism, they prefer that it be dead, and Close's gargantuan mugs do the trick. Close

"I'd walk a mile for this book."*



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Corvo, for Levi

The old woman in the plain
black dress has earned this.

Grief is not real grief
until, years after, it's mirrored.

Someone you should know
with matted hair, red hands approaches.

How dare you dislodge those
wet eyes from your heart.

Catullus said, *Suns that go down*
have been known to return, but for us . . .

For us, the sky is
unbearably wide. Go ahead,

see it as separation.
This is no space,

this new land that denies the dead,
calls that strange bird *crow*

that's so high now nothing
could reflect its great belly.

This is no night.
His black wings have fully opened.

ANN SNODGRASS

gives realism a creepy impact. This show is an update on the Magic Realism that the Modern favored half a century ago. Close's not-quite-there faces could be interpreted as the descendants of *Hide-and-Seek*, Pavel Tchelitchew's exercise in dissolving everything into everything else, which went into the collection in 1942, the year it was finished, and was for decades just about the most popular painting in the house.

At the Museum of Modern Art, realists are generally presented as being obsessed with freaks, loners, and outsiders. There is Balthus's portrait of Miró, who some people will think is a little too close to his young daughter. There is Giacometti's portrait of his mother, a tiny figure lost in an enormous room. And there is Edward Hopper's decrepit Victorian house, isolated against the gray sky. There is something arch and stylized about the Modern's insistence that realism cannot really fit into a modern tradition. Yet the truth is that realism, owing to its empirical nature, is an anti-grand-tradition tradition. Since realists are by definition artists who celebrate particularity, they are always breaking down the generalizations, and that is one of their strengths. What is disheartening is to consider how often in recent decades the monuments of realist painting have been seen as foreshadowing the death of realism. Duchamp's followers are not the only guilty parties.

In Clement Greenberg's 1960 essay on "The Early Flemish Masters," painters such as Gerard David are pressed into the service of an argument about the abstract value of color that seems to segue into Color Field painting. At the beginning of this very strange essay, Greenberg observes: "As far as I know, not a single important painter since the end of the 16th century has, in either works or words, betrayed any significant interest in anything in Flemish painting before Bosch." And having declared that this work is disregarded by artists, Greenberg feels free to rule that the detailed naturalism of Flemish painting was a liability. It had to be counterbalanced, in Memling and in David, by the "sheerly pictorial power color—translucent, vitreous color—is capable of even when it doesn't 'hold the plane.'" From there it is only a hop and a skip to Morris Louis's floating veils of color.

In the early '60s, however, no less a figure than Giacometti was copying Jan van Eyck's *Man in a Turban*, and observing that "I see a tree like Mantegna and van Eyck rather than the Impressionists." Such concerns would not have registered on Greenberg's radar screen, since they were being made by a realist; and for Greenberg a realist was almost by definition not an important contemporary artist. I would say that Gerard David and Morris Louis is a marriage made in art-speak hell, but once you have wrapped your brain around it, you have seen how realism can be used to bolster just about any argument against realist painting. And you are ready for the comments that the video artist Bill Viola, whose work is currently the subject of a retrospective at the Whitney, recently made in *The New York Times Magazine*. "Van Eyck was an incredible craftsman working with the most advanced image-making system on the planet at that time—he was using high-definition." The implication, of course, is that Viola's videos (and perhaps Close's polaroid camera close-ups) are on a continuum with van Eyck's brush.

Painters who are bothered by Viola's remark, as I think they ought to be, would do well to bring the discussion back to Giacometti's interest in van Eyck. Nobody knew better than Giacometti what being modern meant, and it is significant that this artist, who had gone through abstraction and surrealism, and was never a nitpicking realist, was so fascinated by van Eyck. Giacometti saw that van Eyck's scintillating verisimilitude had been pulled out of the abstract patterning and the intricate fantasy of medieval art. And he must have sensed that this early Renaissance evolution was a model for the twentieth-century realist, who was also reacting to a more abstract and fantastical kind of art. The gravity of van Eyck's imagery grows out of the artist's sense that realism is not so much birth as rebirth—living things brought back to life on the canvas. If there is a mortuary aura to realism in this century, it is because realism in the wake of abstraction is always exhumation.

You could write a whole history of death and realism in the twentieth century. It would include Balthus's *Victim*, painted in the late '30s, in which we see a young woman, reclining with her eyes closed and a knife nearby but no wound on her body. Sabine Rewald, in her catalogue for the Metropolitan's 1984 Balthus retrospective, observes that this woman is "not really dead, perhaps only momentarily drained of life"; and in that thought is an allegory of realism in our time. The work of the English painter Stanley Spencer, who was the subject of a retrospective at the Hirshhorn last fall, is also full of images of death and resurrection. Even his most searchingly direct nudes, landscapes, and self-portraits have a grayed-down look that makes us feel that the life has gone out of things.

This troubled modern realist tradition echoes through Gabriel Laderman's *Dance of Death*. He has filled his composition with a marvelous play of purplish shadows, which are doubled and tripled into mysterious patterns, so that beneath the dancers' feet realism seems to be dissolving into abstraction right before our eyes. Laderman is going beyond realism into emblems, fantasy, and magic; and he makes us believe that all of this is part of the realist's territory. His theme comes out of the late Middle Ages, and as you study the iconography of the Dance of Death, you realize that some of the most famous representations of this strange confrontation are also among the great monuments in the rise of European naturalism. I am not sure that Laderman was aware of all of this while he was painting, but it hardly matters. In confronting death, he has recovered realism as a life principle. •

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...When a Majority of Americans Say We Should Not Admit More Than 100,000 a Year at Most!!

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The poll showed 70% of Americans – that's over two out of three – want immigration cut drastically to not over 300,000 a year. How in the world can our government possibly justify an immigration policy that allows four times that many to come here every year? Don't our elected representatives have an obligation to heed the clearly expressed wishes of the American public?

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Polls have shown for years that, almost unanimously, Americans want illegal immigration stopped. Despite that, our Federal Government has done very little to reduce illegal immigration, much less stop it. An estimated 350,000 illegal aliens settle here permanently each year. That is over three times more than the 100,000 a year a majority of Americans favor for total immigration. These illegal settlers join a pool of an estimated five to six million illegal aliens who are already living here permanently in violation of our laws.

The Roper poll cited above showed that 74% of Americans (three out of every four) want illegal aliens identified and deported. So why is our government not doing just that? In 1996, only about 110,000 illegal aliens were deported. A vastly increased program of deportations would not only deter prospective illegal migrants abroad, but also motivate those already here to leave voluntarily.

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NPG urges a drastic reduction in immigration solely because of its contribution to the disastrous growth of our U.S. population. We are on the path from our present population of 268 million to a population of nearly 500 million by 2100. More than 90% of that growth will be the direct result of post-2000 immigration.

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Romania, the Holocaust, and a rediscovered writer.

The Incompatibilities

By Norman Manea

In the rough transition to democracy, the countries of Eastern Europe are going simultaneously forward and backward. The "forward" movement concerns their contract with the future: their adaptation to the social and economic requirements of the capitalist world, and the international accreditation that this will bring them. The "backward" movement is owed to their fragmented and incomplete evaluation of their history before and during the era of communism, a history that was manipulated and falsified by the ideology and the interests of the single Party of the totalitarian state.

Since 1989, this tension has often made itself felt in the everyday life of Eastern Europe. In Romania, the question of NATO membership for ex-communist countries found almost the entire political spectrum of the country taking a pro-NATO position. Suddenly the promise of a stable, integrated future within the European Community appeared to offer a cure for the country's traumatic past, which was seen as resulting more from the aggressiveness of the neighbor to the East (and from betrayal by the West) than from any shortcomings in the public life of the country itself. And then, at the same euphoric moment a book appeared to complicate matters. A glimpse of a new Romanian future coincided with a glimpse of its past, with the publication, in 1996, of *Jurnal, 1935-1944* (*Journal, 1935-1944*), by the Romanian-Jewish writer Mihail Sebastian.

This chronicle of the dark years of Nazism reignited the great debate about anti-Semitism and the Holocaust in Romania. These are subjects that some would have preferred to ignore. Sebastian's important book—it is appearing in a number of European countries, and it deserves to be published in the United States as well—exposes the deformities of a decade in which "everyone was a little wheel in the huge anti-Semitic factory of the Romanian State." In the writer's journals of those days, the banal regularity of his daily life—with its book-reading, its love affairs, its poverty, its meetings with friends—sets the brutality and the fear in sharp relief. In Sebastian's world, however, the quotidian is ready at any moment to kindle to vast reserves of ferocity.

In this respect, Sebastian's *Journal* resembles Victor Klemperer's massive journal of the years 1933 to 1945, *Ich will Zeugnis ablegen bis zum letzten* (*I Will Testify to the Bitter End*), whose publication in Germany in 1995 also had a powerful impact. The much-delayed publication of these books in Eastern Europe, where the Nazi period was frozen in the clichés of the Communist period, gives witness to the everyday lives of "assimilated" Jews awaiting death from the world to which they thought they belonged. But Sebastian was an elegant stylist, who moved from theme to theme with admirable ease, and his book is a greater literary achievement than Klemperer's. It offers a lucid and finely shaded analysis of erotic and social life, a Jew's journal, a reader's notebook, a music-lover's diary. Above all, it is an account of the "rhinocerization" of certain major Romanian intellectuals whom Sebastian counted among his friends, including Mircea Eliade, E.M. Cioran, Constantin Noica, and Camil Petrescu, writers and thinkers who were mesmerized by the nationalism of the extreme right and the Nazi-fascist delirium of Europe's "reactionary revolution."

Rhinocerization? The odd term derives from Eugene Ionesco's play *Rhinoceros*, a farcical allegory of the incubation and the birth of fanaticism, or "the birth of a totalitarianism that grows, propagates, conquers, transforms a whole world and, naturally, being totalitarian, transforms it totally." The playwright described his play as the story of "an ideological contagion." Ionesco is one of the few admirable characters to emerge from Sebastian's journal, a friend with whom Sebastian saw eye to eye in rejecting the totalitarian temptations of the left and the right. Ionesco has himself given a memorable description of the atmosphere in Bucharest at that time. "University professors, students, intellectuals were turning Nazi, Iron Guard, one after another," he wrote. "From time to time, one of our friends would say: 'Of course I don't agree with them at all, but on certain points, for example the Jews, I must admit. . . .' And this was symptomatic. Three weeks later, the same man would become a Nazi. He was caught up in the machinery, he accepted everything, he became a rhinoceros."

In poignant sequences that are not easily forgotten, Sebastian dwells on the gradations of this "machinery" of brutalization, and on the historical context in which it developed. Today, more than half a century after it was written, this journal stands as one of the most important human and literary documents of the pre-Holocaust climate in Romania and Eastern Europe, of the conditions in which the Judeocide could be unleashed.

Mihail Sebastian (this was the pen name of Joseph Hechter) was born in 1907, to a middle-class Jewish family, in the Danube port of Bráila, a town that he always loved; and he died in an accident in the spring of 1945, less than a year after Soviet troops entered Romania. (He was rushing to give the opening lecture on Balzac at the newly opened Popular (Free) University in Bucharest, and was run over by a truck. Recently, some people have tried to connect the accident to Sebastian's resignation from the Communist paper *România Liberá*, for which he wrote briefly in 1944.) During the interwar period, Sebastian was well known for his lyrical and ironic plays (*Star Without a Name*, *Let's Play Vacation*, and *The Last Hour*), as well as for urbane psychological novels tinged with melancholy (*Women*, *The Town with Acacia Trees*, *The Accident*), and his extraordinary literary essays.

Sebastian's activity as a journalist centered on the conservative paper *Cuvîntul*, which was edited by Nae Ionescu (no relation of the playwright), and this often set him at loggerheads with both the left-wing press and the Jewish press. Nae Ionescu was a lively minor thinker preoccupied with metaphysics, logic, and religion. He never wrote an important work. He was, rather, a charismatic figure—a kind of guru—for young Romanian intellectuals between 1922 and 1940. He ended up as a supporter of the extremely right-wing, extremely nationalistic "Christian-orthodox" Iron Guard movement. Many years later, in 1967, Mircea Eliade bizarrely included Nae Ionescu in the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, and wrote this about his mentor: "God, for Nae Ionescu, is present in history through the Incarnation . . . man's mode

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of being is completely fulfilled only through death, death is above all transcendent." A Romanian reader will recognize in Eliade's words more than a strictly academic evaluation.

Sebastian's *Journal* begins in 1935, when Nazi Germany was flexing its muscles, and anti-Semitism was brimming with energy, and the danger of war was growing more acute. Indeed, a year earlier Sebastian had provoked a hue and cry with his novel *De două mii de ani* (*For Two Thousand Years*). Written in the form of a pseudo-diary, and somewhat in the style of André Gide, the novel portrays the identity crisis of its protagonist, a young Jewish intellectual in Romania, in a period when the country itself is also undergoing the crisis of modernity. The first-person, nameless narrator, an architect by profession, records not only his apprenticeship years of friendship, love, and culture, but also the shock of his encounter with Romanian anti-Semitism.

Sebastian's characters include the mesmerizing professor Ghita Blidaru, a sharp and passionate critic of modern values (modelled on Nae Ionescu), the nihilist Parlea (modelled on Cioran), the "Europeanist" architect Vieru, the Zionist Sami Winkler, the Jewish Marxist S.T. Haim (modelled on Bellu Zilber, a peculiar member of the then-illegal Romanian Communist Party), the Yiddishist Abraham Sulitzer, the British businessman Ralph T. Rice. The last lines of the novel express the protagonist's breakthrough into a feeling of resignation. Is he a Romanian? Is he a Jew? Who, precisely, is he? As he gazes at the villa that he designed and built for his "native Romanian" mentor Blidaru, he no longer seems to care about the search for roots. He experiences a moment of serene separation. He accepts with equanimity the two-thousand-year-old heritage of the outsider. The house is what its wanderer-builder always wished himself to be: "simple, clean, and calm, with an even heart, opened to all seasons."

Sebastian's novel is set against the background of an anti-Semitism that had not yet taken the extreme form of the "Final Solution." But the catastrophe was rooted in what preceded it, as was suggested by Ionescu's preface to Sebastian's novel. Sebastian had asked Nae Ionescu to write the preface in 1931, when he started work on the book. Ionescu had guided Sebastian's early steps in journalism. As a professor of philosophy of religion and a scholar of the Old Testament, he had a good knowledge of Judaism. Though Ionescu was politically committed to the Right,

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he had a few years earlier rejected "the theory of the national state" with all its "police-type absurdities."

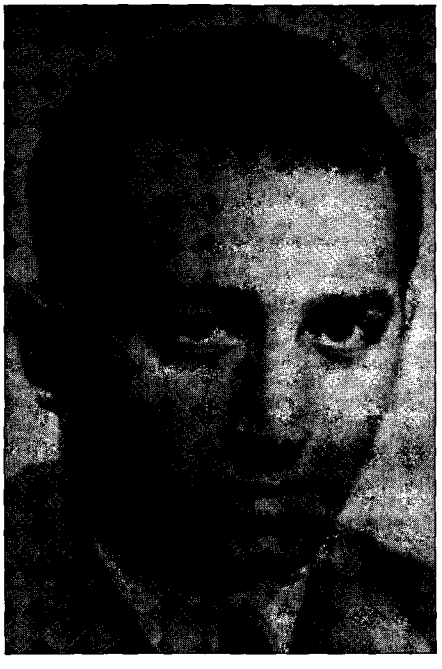
By the time Sebastian finished his novel, however, Europe had already lurched violently to the right. In Romania it was not just an "anti-Semitic" year, it was, as Sebastian put it, a "hooligan year." And in keeping with the political weather, Nae Ionescu had become one of the ideologues of the Iron Guard, also known as the Legion, the right-wing extremist organization that deployed anti-Semitism as a major political weapon within a kind of terroristic Orthodox Christian fundamentalism.

In 1934, still believing in his old friend's loyalty of "conscience," Sebastian gallantly repeated his request for Ionescu's endorsement of his book; and his former mentor, now a "Legionary Socrates," respected the promise he had made. He wrote the preface. And the words with which Sebastian expressed his shock on reading the preface have been conveyed by Eliade in his memoirs: "Nae gave me the preface. A tragedy, a real death sentence!" This was no exaggeration.

Nae Ionescu's preface argued that Jewish and Christian values are essentially irreconcilable. The really virulent language comes at the end, when the Jewish-Christian conflict is seen as soluble only through the disappearance of its cause, the Jews. The Iron Guard ideologue provided a definition of Romanian identity: "We are Orthodox Christian because we are Romanian, and Romanian because we are Orthodox." This was not a new definition; prestigious intellectuals had already espoused it. What was especially dramatic, and especially dangerous, was the historical context in which these inflammatory pronouncements now appeared.

Especially hard to forget was the part of Nae Ionescu's preface in which "Judah," having "refused to recognize Christ the Messiah," was declared an essential, irreducible enemy, a "dissolver of Christian values." The indictment was total, unconditional: "Judah suffers because it gave birth to Christ, beheld him and did not believe.... Judah suffers because it is Judah.... Iosif Hechter, you are sick. You are sick to the core because all you can do is suffer.... The Messiah has come, Iosif Hechter, and you have had no knowledge of him.... Or you have not seen, because pride put scales over your eyes.... Iosif Hechter, do you not feel that cold and darkness are enfolding you?" The writer of the novel that was being introduced was not referred to as Sebastian, but as Hechter, as "Judah."

Thus the hooligan year 1934 was given a hooligan scandal. At the time, it seemed to some commentators that Sebastian's willingness to allow this incitement to genocide to appear at the front of his "Jewish" novel was perverse and cowardly. Assailed by fascists and Marxists, Christians and Jews, liberals and extremists, Sebastian replied with an essay, "How I Became a Hooligan," which appeared in 1935, the year in which his *Journal* begins. He wrote that anti-Semitism, which "channels toward Jews the hate-filled distractions of organisms in crisis," was nonetheless "on the periphery of Jewish suffering." In 1935, he still had a certain condescension toward external adversity, seeing it as minor or rudimentary in comparison with the ardent "internal adversity" that besets the Jews.



MIHAIL SEBASTIAN, 1907-1945

Despite the dangers closing in from all sides, Sebastian continued to dwell romantically on the "spiritual autonomy" that Jewish suffering conferred upon the Jews. Judaism was a strict and tragic position in the face of existence. "No people has more ruthlessly confessed to its real or imagined sins; no one has kept stricter watch on himself or punished himself more severely. The biblical prophets are the fieriest voices ever to have sounded on earth." Sebastian locates the "open wound" of Judaism, its "tragic nerve," in the tension between "a tumultuous sensitivity and a ruthlessly critical sense," between "intelligence in its coldest forms and passion in its most untrammelled forms."

Sebastian liked to refer to himself as a "Danube Jew," and defined his identity as follows: "I am not a supporter, but always a dissident. I have confidence only in the single individual, but in him I have a great deal of confidence." He was adamantly opposed to the idea (it was all around him) that the collective has priority. "The death of the individual is the death of the critical spirit," and ultimately "the death of man." Sebastian's enemy is man in uniform: "Is it religion you want? Here's a membership card. Or a metaphysic? Here's an anthem. Or a commitment? Here's a leader." He thirsts for dialogue and friendship, but he clings to his faith in solitude: "We can never pay too high a price for the right to be alone, without half-memories, without half-loves, without half-truths."

As for the country that he never ceased to love for its paradoxes, its contradictions, and its eccentricities, Sebastian was not inclined to flatter it. "Nothing is serious, nothing is grave, nothing is true in this culture of smiling lampooners. Above all, nothing is incompatible.... Compromise is the blossom of violence. We therefore have a culture of brutality and horse-trading." The formulation profoundly describes a time when collusion and compromise were preparing a future of violence. Sebastian recalls the surprise that a Frenchman visiting Bucharest in 1933 felt at the intellectual "cohabitation" prevalent in the country. A notorious Iron Guardist, "caught in the act of intellectual tenderness" with a notorious Marxist, explained that "we are just friends—which doesn't involve commitment." *Just friends*: this, for Sebastian, is a "summing up of Bucharest psychology," a psychology of stupefying mélanges and metamorphoses. "Incompatibility: a concept completely lacking at every level of our public life." The formulation recurs in the *Journal*: "Incompatibility is something unknown on the Danube."

This and other statements appeared even more prophetic as the situation in Romania became more and more extreme. In 1937 the Iron Guard (supported by Sebastian's friend Eliade) scored a major success at the polls. Finally there were no illusions. "All is lost," Sebastian noted on February 21. The anti-Semitic government led by the poet Octavian Goga introduced into official discourse the evil "energy" of a language attuned to new imperatives: *jidan* (kike), *jidánime* (a horde of kikes). The official review of Jewish citizenship, and the elimination of Jews from the bar and the press, was followed by further restrictions and humiliations.

The danger grew. Officially inspired anti-Semitism gradually became a cheap entertainment within the reach of more and more people. The Iron Guard "rebellion" in January 1941 unleashed the predictable horrors in a city terrorized by armed street clashes and murderers

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chanting religious hymns. "A large number of Jews have been killed in Băneasa Forest and thrown there (most of them naked)," Sebastian noted on January 29. "But it seems that another lot have been executed at the slaughterhouse, at Străulesti." A few days later, when he was reading about anti-Semitic persecutions in the Middle Ages in Simon Dubnow's *History of the Jews*, he turned again to what had happened. "What stuns you most about the Bucharest massacre is the absolutely bestial ferocity with which things were done. . .the Jews slaughtered at Străulesti were hung up on abattoir hooks, in the place of split-open cattle. Stuck to each corpse was a piece of paper with the words: 'kosher meat'.... I cannot find more terrible events in Dubnow."

The worst fears were coming true. Even before the horrors, Sebastian had recorded premonitions. "An uneasy evening—without my realizing why. I feel obscure threats: as if the door isn't shut properly, as if the window shutters are transparent, as if the walls themselves are becoming translucent. Everywhere, at any moment, it is possible that some unspecified dangers will pounce from outside—dangers I know to have always been there.... You feel like shouting for help—but from whom?" This was written, as if in a state of siege, on January 14, 1941.

Many of Sebastian's friends were now in the enemy camp. The failure of the Iron Guard revolt infuriated and embittered them. "The Legion wipes its ass with this country," said Cioran immediately after the Iron Guard was defeated. Eliade expressed the same reaction more professorially: "Romania doesn't deserve a legionary movement." In 1941, General Ion Antonescu, a former ally of the Legion who was obsessed with "law and order," established a military dictatorship with the support of the Führer. This did not put a stop to anti-Semitic murders. The summer of 1941 brought not only Romania's entry into the war, but also a fresh round of atrocities. Massacres took place at Iași; and long before the Nazi gas chambers were established—also in Iași—the sinister experiment of a "death train" killed hundreds and thousands of Jews by asphyxiation in sealed wagons on a journey heading nowhere.

"A simple account of what is reported about the Jews killed in Iași or transported by train ... is beyond any words, feelings or attitudes. A bleak, pitch-black, crazy nightmare." Thus Sebastian in his diary on July 12, 1941. A few months earlier, in April 1941, the military dictator Antonescu told his ministers: "I'll retreat into my fortress and let the crowd massacre the Jews. After the massacre, I'll make order." And in September 1941, after the Iași massacre, and after Romania entered the war on Germany's side, Antonescu explained that the fight was not against the Slavs, it was against the Jews. "It's a mortal combat. Either we win and the world will be purified, or they win and we become their slaves."

In the autumn of 1941, the Jewish population of Bukovina began to be deported to Transnistria. On October 20, Sebastian writes: "An anti-Semitic dementia that nobody can stop. Nowhere are there any restraints, any reason.... I see pallor and fear on Jewish faces. Their smile, their atavistic optimism freeze up. Their old consoling irony dwindles away." The *Journal* goes on to record the census of residents with "Jewish blood," the "carnage in Bukovina and Bessarabia," the obligation of Jews to give clothing to the state and of the Jewish community to pay a huge sum of money to the authorities, the ban on Jews selling goods in markets, the confiscation of skis and bicycles from Jews. "There is something diabolical in anti-Semitism," we read in the entry on November 12, 1941. "When we are not drowning in blood, we are wading through muck." For a rationalist such as Sebastian to use the word "diabolical" is a measure of the bestiality provoked by the "vulgar" anti-Semitism of his time.

As Sebastian's journal proceeds between the blood and the filth, the "atavistic optimism" and the "consoling irony" grow dim. And the "internal adversity" of the Jews, with its self-criticism and its "spiritual autonomy"? The *Journal* itself illustrates the awful truth that those are the natural assumptions, the necessary assumptions, of the human condition, and in no way the self-consuming aberration of a particular people. Even when external hostility is everywhere, and internal adversity appears to be a forbidden or trifling luxury, critical introspection survives, and it becomes the instrument of the spirit's survival.

As the individual becomes just an anonymous member of a threatened community, the solitude by which Sebastian defined himself changes, even if its substance does not alter. "We can never pay too high a price for the right to be alone": for a besieged man, surely, this sounds like a frivolous understatement. For what is the "price" of the solitude of a whole community, a whole people? It defies any normal parameter of suffering. For this reason, the tone of the *Journal* is really remarkable. The intimate exchange between solitude and solidarity slowly gives way to a mournful compassion. The "old" private solitude allows itself to be welcomed by the new isolation of the persecuted group, in a wounded, coerced joining.

Under the pressure of hatred and horror, Sebastian's writing maintains the "grace" of its intelligence, which evil does not succeed in destroying. Marked now by the star of the captive minority to which he has been returned, the writer attempts to enliven the emptiness of waiting. He listens to music; he reads; he writes; he sees friends. A large and moving part of the *Journal* focuses on friendship, especially on his friendship with Mircea Eliade, the "first and last friend."

After the "death sentence" handed down to him by Nae Ionescu, the "hooligan" Hechter-Sebastian no longer claimed anything but the right to perfect solitude, "without half-memories, without half-loves, without half-truths." In the sharply worse conditions of the following years, however, he proved to be still in the painful grip of Eliade, persisting in a friendship of halves of memory, love, and truth. The crisis of Sebastian's friendship with Eliade grew steadily worse. As early as 1936, it was no longer possible for Sebastian to ignore Eliade's political affiliations. "I would like to remove any political references from our discussion. But is that possible?" The answer is not long in coming: "The street reaches up to us whether we like it or not, and in the most trivial reflection I can feel the ever wider gulf between us.... There are awkward silences between us ... the disappointments keep piling up—one of them being his involvement with the anti-Semitic *Vremea*." (*Vremea* was a rather liberal weekly until the mid-1930s, when it started to "evolve" according to the spirit of the time.)

Sebastian is already grasping the character of Eliade's politics, though his lucidity is distorted by sentimentality, and by his essentially apolitical vision. In 1937, however, a "long political discussion with Mircea" leads to a sad realization: "He was lyrical, nebulous, full of exclamations, interjections, apostrophes.... From all that I'll just choose his (finally honest) statement that he loves the Guard, has hope in it, and awaits its victory." In the same year, Eliade's famous declaration of faith, "Why I Believe in the Triumph of the Legionary Movement," was published in the movement's paper *Buna Vestire*. It included the following question: "Can the Romanian nation end its life ... ravaged by poverty and syphilis, overrun by Jews

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and torn apart by foreigners?"

It was not long before Eliade's question found an answer in the humiliations and the threats that his former friend, the alien Sebastian, born Hechter, had to endure, as he faced being overrun at any moment by the local "patriots." And further dialogue with Eliade only confirmed this. "I told him I was thinking of leaving the country," Sebastian writes on January 16, 1938. "He agreed, as if it did indeed go without saying." That is how it was: the "cleansing" of the country of its Jews was a self-evident ideal, for which the Legionary movement never ceased to agitate.

"I have only to walk in the door and suddenly there is silence." People speak about their Jewish acquaintance in one way when he is in the room and in another way when he leaves the room. On December 7, 1937, Sebastian finds Eliade's concealment of the truth "even more sad" than the terrible truth itself, which was that Eliade had traveled from village to village campaigning for the Iron Guard as a "propagandist" and also, it seemed, as a potential candidate of the Legion in the elections. Astounding reports reach Sebastian about what Eliade says in his absence. In March 1937, Eliade is disgusted by the "Jewish spirit" of a ballet. In 1939, at the time of the German invasion of Poland, Eliade says this: "The Poles' resistance in Warsaw is Jewish resistance. Only yids are capable of blackmail by putting women and children in the front line, so as to take advantage of German scruples." And the example of Poland, with Jewish "blackmail" and German "scruples," inspires in Eliade equally profound considerations about Romania: "Only a pro-German policy can save us.... Rather than a Romania again invaded by kikes, it would be better to have a German protectorate."

Sebastian's link with Eliade continued intermittently, until the latter left Bucharest in 1940 for the Romanian embassy in London, where eyewitnesses described him as a propagandist for the Iron Guard. Later Eliade was sent as a diplomat to Lisbon, where his fascist convictions were given more or less disguised forms of expression. About Eliade's time in Lisbon, Sebastian notes on May 27, 1942: "Now he is more of a Legionary than ever." (After the war Eliade referred only equivocally and in passing to his guilt. See my essay, "Happy Guilt," in TNR, August 5, 1991.)

So why did Sebastian cling to this friendship with a man with whom he should have been "incompatible"? Why did he become himself an example of the ambiguities that he denounced? Surely Sebastian did not delude himself that the friendship would protect him from the danger all around him. No, there was a different reason. For a rational and gentle man such as Sebastian, the illusion of friendship provided the encouragement of a normal past. Memories are "the only paradise from which we cannot be expelled," as the German poet Jean Paul observed. Moreover, Sebastian had a calm, resigned disdain for everything ideological and tribal. He had also a writer's curiosity about the surprises and the ambiguities that he observed in himself and those around him, and this, too, perhaps, made him tolerant of his fascist friend. As early as 1936, when the ever wider "gulf" with his "first and last" friend could be felt in "the most trivial reflection," he asked in his journal: "Will I lose Mircea for *so little?*"

For so little! Sebastian's extraordinary words express his contempt for the mediocrity of politics, and his irritation at Eliade's deplorable "error." The innocent will show the world—will show himself, against the world—that he can save the guilty, as a friend and an interlocutor. He cannot admit that mediocrity has won the day even in the case of his brilliant and beloved Eliade, just as he cannot admit that there is not merely "incompatibility" between the intellectual and the man in uniform, but also a deeper, more subtle relationship of attraction and repulsion, a relationship eager for the thrills and the compensations of vitality, mystification, martyrdom, and all manner of excess.

Perfectly aware of the abyss between himself and Eliade (an ideological abyss that was already filling with corpses), Sebastian nevertheless records the surprising moments of affection that linger in their moribund friendship. He cannot help being concerned by the risks that his friend faced in his ugly adventure, though he himself feels every day the cold and the darkness of the threat from the uniforms of Eliade's "comrades." Sebastian's portraits of Eliade, Cioran, Nae Ionescu, and other Romanian intellectuals in the grip of the nationalist delirium are devastating precisely because of their calm, patient, affectionate tone, their mingling of horror and candor.

In its historical context, the Sebastian-Eliade friendship stands as a symbol of everything that signified terror and hope, ambiguity and fear, cowardice and chance, in the Jewish-Christian relationship in Europe in the obscene decade between 1935 to 1945. These staggering and shocking Romanian "compatibilities," their double-dealing and triple-dealing with complicity and compromise, played a role in the dissipation of moral (and not only moral) certainties, offering terrible, or generous, surprises. This might explain both the horrific persecution and the eventual salvation of a large part of the Jewish population of Romania. Sebastian's *Journal* records, with growing weariness and bitterness, the precise forms of disguise and fakery.

After the Legionary revolt was defeated in 1941, Sebastian watches some of its ex-fanatics hurry to accommodate themselves to the new situation: "From one day to the next they renege, modify, attenuate, explain, agree on a line, justify themselves, forget what displeases and remember what suits them." He discovers in horror how his friend Eliade—who had presented himself at the Romanian embassy in London as a future dignitary of the Legion—sums up this year in which the most dreadful anti-Jewish massacres were carried out in Iaşi and Bucharest. "There have been two extraordinary things for me this year," Eliade wrote from London to a mutual friend: "the astonishing weakness of the Soviet air force, and my reading of Camoens."

And yet, even in this nightmarish atmosphere, a few figures brighten the pages of the *Journal*. First and foremost among them is Eugene Ionesco. In Cişmigiu Park in Bucharest, as one of Hitler's speeches was being broadcast on the radio, Ionesco stood up choking at what he heard. "He was pale, white in the face. 'I can't take it! I can't!' He said this with a kind of physical desperation...." Sebastian records on October 3, 1941. "I felt like hugging him." He also notes a message from another friend: "You make me feel ashamed, Mihai—ashamed that you suffer and I do not." And after the anti-Semitic massacres in Iaşi, he recalls the reaction of two university professors in the Moldovan capital. One covered his face with "a gesture of impotence, fear and disgust"; the other uttered just a few words: "The most bestial day in the history of mankind."

Finally, in 1944, when the Red Army entered Bucharest, not a few people changed sides in a flash. "Everyone is rushing to fill posts," Sebastian records, "to make use of titles, to establish rights.... A taste for lampooning alternates in me with a kind of helpless loathing [for] all the imposture, all the effrontery, all the sinister play-acting."

This, then, was Sebastian's odyssey, which he experienced all in the same place. In 1934, declaring himself a "Danube Jew," the hero of Sebastian's novel *For Two Thousand Years* movingly

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stated on the author's behalf: "I should like to know what anti-Semitic laws could cancel the irrevocable fact that I was born on the Danube and love this land.... Against my Jewish taste for inner catastrophe, the river raised the example of its regal indifference." In 1943, he was asking, "Shall I go back to those people? Will the war have passed without breaking anything—without anything irrevocable, anything irreducible, between my life 'before' and my life 'tomorrow'?" In 1944, he was preparing to leave "the eternal Romania in which nothing ever changes." His description of an encounter with a Jewish captain from the U.S. Army suggests which destination he had in mind for his adventure: "an unaffected young man full of vitality, concerned about us as Jews, concerned about democracy and its reality. A human being. A new figure. Really somebody." But Sebastian's hope of leaving "the land of the Danube" was cut short by his accidental death on May 29, 1945. He was 38 years old. Death spared him any postwar experiment with "compulsory happiness" in Communist captivity in his own country.

The publication of Sebastian's journal sparked a powerful reaction in Romania. Several editions have already sold out, and the discussion continues in the press. The book provoked a catharsis in a society that seems afraid to scrutinize its past and hesitates to admit its own contribution to the Holocaust, in a country in which criticism of the nationalist tradition in culture is sometimes considered an unpatriotic act, if not actual blasphemy. "In reading it," writes Vasile Popovici, a writer from Timisoara, where the anti-Ceausescu revolt began in 1989, "you cannot possibly remain the same. The Jewish problem becomes your problem. A huge sense of shame spreads over a whole period of the national culture and history, and its shadow covers you too."

Still, the number of those who are willing to make the Jewish problem their problem is not very large. For a significant number of public voices in Romania, the Holocaust seems to be (as Jean-Marie Le Pen once put it) a "detail" of the war. Even those who recognize the scale of the catastrophe do not always seem prepared to accept what it reveals. This is especially evident in the debate about Marshal Antonescu, the military dictator during the period of Romania's alliance with Nazi Germany, to whom the Romanian Parliament paid homage in 1991, and who has been honored in many public places in today's Romania. When a distinguished Romanian intellectual with democratic leanings intervened a few years ago in the controversy about the rehabilitation of Antonescu, he argued that an "exclusive, overwhelming" emphasis on the dictator's anti-Jewish policy "would prevent science—in this case, history—from honestly and objectively performing its duty." Similarly, in the polemics surrounding the publication of Sebastian's *Journal*, there have been voices "annoyed" at this new and weighty testimony in what some see as an overly protracted discussion of the Holocaust. Not surprisingly, doubts have been cast on the authenticity of the text. Critics have ruminated on the subjectivity of private journals generally. All this, so as not to face the evidence of what Sebastian wrote.

It is little wonder that even the infrequent empathy with the suffering of the Jews is peculiarly expressed. In 1997, the director of the publishing house *Humanitas*, the very house that published Sebastian's *Journal*, gave a talk affectingly entitled "*Sebastian, mon frère*" at the Jewish Community Center in Bucharest. He explained his solidarity with Jewish suffering in terms of his own hardship under the Communists and the post-Communists. It is an analogy that leaves no room to evoke anti-Semitism and the Holocaust properly, or to analyze honestly the "happy guilt" of such intellectuals as Eliade, Cioran, Nae Ionescu, and Noica.

Also, in an editorial statement entitled "*Vintoarea de vrájitoare*," or "The Witch Hunt," the director of the important magazine *România literará* complained that the condemnation of Céline and Hamsun was lasting too long. He deplored the "Israeli" campaign against Eliade, and the recent debate in France about Cioran's Legionary past, and the "exaggerations" in Sebastian's *Journal*. Never mind that the (far from unanimous) condemnation of Céline and Hamsun has not precluded the recognition of their literary distinction; or that their guilt was owed not necessarily to their writings, but to their actual collaboration with the Nazis. By describing criticism in an open society as a "witch hunt," and comparing it with the communist repression of intellectual life, the editorial in *România literará* was promoting a shocking confusion of terms.

In contrast with such slips and ambiguities, we may cite a statement by another prominent Romanian intellectual. Writing in 1997, Petru Cretia observed that "the most monstrous thing after the Holocaust is the persistence of even a minimal anti-Semitism." In this context, he mentioned Sebastian's *Journal*, and the old-new compatibilities: "I know public figures who, while parading flawless morality, impeccably democratic conduct, wise level-headedness, and perhaps a pompous solemnity, are capable in private—and in some cases elsewhere—of foaming at the mouth against Jews: here and now. I have seen irrefutable proof of the fury aroused by Sebastian's *Journal*, and of the feeling that lofty national values are besmirched by such calm, sad, and forgiving revelations on the part of that fair-minded (often angelic) witness." This statement appeared just a few days before the death of this distinguished man of letters and good Christian. It was published not in a mass-circulation magazine, but in *Realitatea evreiascá*, the newspaper of the Jewish community in Romania.

What, then, are we to conclude from Mihail Sebastian and his posthumous career? At least this: that the "forward" movement of Eastern Europe should be evaluated not only for its ability to modernize political and economic structures, but also for its ability to clarify the recent history of these scarred societies, and to direct them toward the full truth. This is not an easy task, and it is first and foremost the task of intellectuals, not politicians. But our future is premised on the quality, on the probity, of our understanding of the past.

—translated by Patrick Camiller

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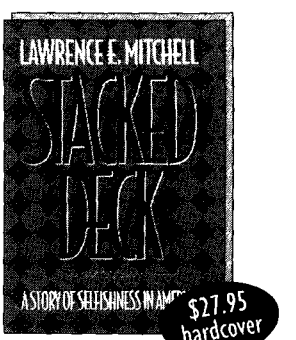

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The Enemy Within

By Roy Porter

The Gospel of Germs: Men, Women, and the Microbe in American Life by Nancy Tomes

(Harvard University Press, 351 pp., $29.95)

Thirty years ago, in one of those ringing rhetorical flights one always lives to regret, the Surgeon General of the United States declared victory in the war against microbes: the time had come, he proclaimed, "to close the book on infectious diseases." But the end of the century finds us poring over that terrible volume once more, and it is easy to see why. The reality of AIDS and the prospect of invasion by superbugs such as Ebola (and Hollywood's exploitation of such dangers, as in *Outbreak*) have reactivated fears of devastating infection in a generation that grew up secure behind the protective shields of penicillin, the Salk vaccine, and the other miracles of modern medicine.

More broadly, the contemporary mind has become obsessed with all manner of threats from invisible, sinister powers. Reds are no longer under the beds; but will we get cancer from electrical powerlines and from radon accumulating in our cellars, or brain tumors from our mobile phones? And what about abduction by extraterrestrial aliens? By way of a protective reflex against all this, we arm ourselves with strident assertions of autonomy, taking exception to unwelcome violations, whether it be cigarette smoke or the trifling physical contact now commonly inflated into "sexual harassment." In today's climate of *noli me tangere*, germs are the ultimate miscreants, the archetypal assailants.

In the beginning, as Nancy Tomes explains in her masterly study of how germs infiltrated the American imagination, the microbes didn't have it all their own way. Many folks—doctors and lay people alike—didn't even believe that they existed. "Where are these little beasts?" rasped John Hughes Bennett, a Scottish medical professor, in the 1860s. "Show them to us, and we shall believe in them. Has anyone seen them yet?" But superior microscopes soon put paid to that objection. (By the 1930s, electron microscopes allowed even viruses to be examined.) Robert Koch's laboratory techniques, backed by his "postulates," proved that microbes actually caused diseases; and Pasteur's successes with vaccines showed how to fight germs with germs. By the 1880s, armed with such examples, the apostles of germs were evangelizing the nation.

High-profile tragedies had already prepared the mind. In England, the Prince Consort died of typhoid; and two of Pasteur's own daughters also succumbed, as did the Lincolns' son Willie. Then President Garfield, having survived Charles Guiteau's assassination attempt in 1881, caught a fatal fever as he recuperated. Did germs lurking in the White House succeed where the gunman's bullet failed? And if the President was not safe, who was? The gospel of germs demanded a radical rethinking of the very idea of disease.

Hitherto, sickness was largely put down to one's own constitution or manner of living, while epidemics were blamed on unhealthy locations. Thus malaria—literally "bad air"—had been regarded as an emanation from marshes and dumps. Disease was linked to the person or the environment. But bacteriology now taught that it arose from microscopic living invaders. And since there was no way of zapping the bugs once they had penetrated the body, at least until the introduction much later of antibiotics and other "magic bullets," microbiology's message had to be: keep them out!

The danger of infection and infiltration had been scientifically described; but the practical business of prevention continued along much the same lines as had been urged by earlier public health campaigns. Tomes notes that midcentury sanitarians had already warned of the dangers of polluted water supplies, foul drains, blocked privies, and festering slaughterhouses—all notorious sources of the chemical miasmas and poison gases that were believed to trigger typhoid, typhus, and the other urban "filth diseases." The apostles of germs, in their turn, pointed an accusing finger at the self-same black-spots, but now they were condemned for harboring microbes and breeding parasites.

Not surprisingly, cleanliness was at the heart of the high-pressure educational campaigns that were mounted, of the innumerable articles about health published in *Good Housekeeping* and other magazines. A tireless army of social workers, nurses, and home visitors targeted poor families in the tenements of New York and Chicago, catechizing them in scrubbing, sweeping, dusting, and disinfecting. The home became pathologized: "From the cellar, store-room, pantry, bedroom, sitting room and parlor," trumpeted the *Sanitarian* magazine in 1874, "from decaying vegetables, fruits, meats, soiled clothing, old garments, old furniture, refuse of kitchen, mouldy walls, everywhere, a microscopic germ is propagating." Salvation lay in soap, according to publicity campaigns that employed all the gimmicks of Madison Avenue to get the message across.

Meanwhile, entrepreneurs also got in on the "germ sell." They battened on anxieties about bacteria by marketing antiseptics (notably Listerine, named for Joseph Lister, the pioneer of germ-free surgery), filtration systems, patent porcelain toilets, window screens and, later on, refrigerators and vacuum cleaners. Cleanliness became a social fetish and a psychological reassurance. It was presented as the bodyguard against germs no less than it had been the protection against miasmas.

And yet there was an important difference. In germ theory, the bottom line was contagiousness. Hence public health action became fixated on *from* what—and especially from whom—you caught disease. Particular sites and activities were singled out as high-risk. Municipal drinking-fountain cups disappeared, and waiters were now trained to insure that the napkins and the glassware of different guests were never jumbled. The elaborate drapes and the deep-pile carpeting once so prized on Pullman cars were replaced by lighter, easy-to-clean furnishings, in deference to fears that they were germ-traps. In hotels, double-length sheets were installed to preclude bodily contact with possibly infected blankets, and it became normal to give each guest a pristine cake of soap. In due course shop-goods were wrapped in cellophane, developed by Du Pont, and Kleenex would replace cloth handkerchiefs. Many amenities that we now take for granted originated in the germ-warfare innovations of the Progressive Era.

One assumption has often been made about the implications of the new disease theory. Historians believe that the old "constitutional" disease model lent itself to victim-blaming, because it personal-

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ized sickness. Illness was something you brought upon yourself—a view that finds echoes in twentieth-century psychosomatic notions, such as "the cancer personality." Every malady had a meaning and taught a moral. The new etiologies, by contrast, pictured disease as a random, accidental, and hence morally neutral consequence of the proximity of squirming micro-organisms. It wasn't your fault that you got sick. It wasn't anyone's fault. It was just one of those things in the bitter Darwinian struggle for existence.

Thus scientific bacteriology did more than reveal the causes of diseases. It demystified them, and so dissolved prejudices against the sick. But things did not work that way. For one thing, crusaders for health never ceased censuring those who fell sick. They had failed to observe the hygiene commandments; they had not filtered their drinking water; they had drunk from the same communion cup as consumptives. They had allowed their guard to slip, and the enemy sneaked in.

Above all, the new bacteriology intensified suspicions of others, reinforcing "us" and "them" mentalities. As Charles-Edward Winslow pronounced in 1914, "it is people, primarily, and not things that we must guard against." Those who sneezed on trains and spat on sidewalks spelled big trouble. Most insidious of all, of course, were those symptomless "healthy carriers" such as Mary Mallon, the Irish cook whose hidden germs killed off a string of her employers. Once tracked, she was locked away in 1915 in a hut on North Brother Island, on New York's East River, for the rest of her life—banished "like a leper," as she complained. Spreaders of bugs became a fifth column of social traitors, "social germs." A few years later, the likes of "Typhoid Mary" might not have gotten into the country at all. With the rise of bacteriological testing, the immigration controls on Ellis Island grew ever stricter.

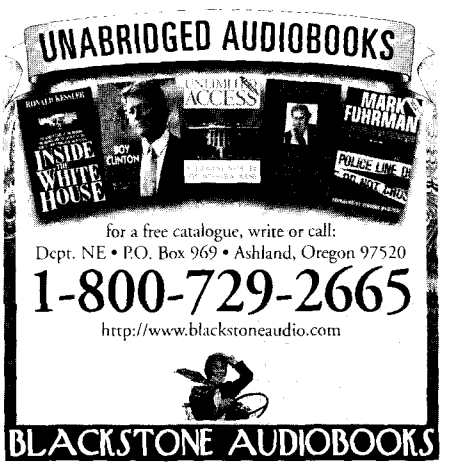
The logic of germ theory dictated elaborate practices of surveying, controlling, and even isolating large populations, conducted by the municipal administrations that were expanding fast in the Gilded Age. In the great northern port and industrial towns, paupers, foreigners, and migrant workers were subjected to the protocols of microbiology, enforced by a zealous corps of sanitary inspectors and social workers. The most spectacular instance involved new responses to tuberculosis, in those days the biggest killer of adults in the Western world, and especially rampant among the families of emancipated slaves who had flocked north.

Traditionally, tuberculosis had been thought of as a constitutional disorder, perhaps inherited. It had not been regarded as contagious, and so consumptives had continued to mingle with family and friends. In any case, wealthy "lungers" had tended to head off to the mountains or deserts, well away from hazardous mass contact with others. But all that changed after Robert Koch isolated the tubercle bacillus in 1882. It was obvious now that tuberculosis could be spread and caught. The consequence was the launching of campaigns to halt the communication of the disease: drives against spitting and other dangerous habits, and against the dust that harbored dried sputum before releasing it into the atmosphere. These campaigns finally led to calls to shut sufferers away in sanatoria.

Among the groups judged exceptionally susceptible were African Americans. Their reputed squalor and slovenly habits did not merely expose them to the disease. According to the germ theory, they would then constitute a dire threat to others, since so many of them worked as laundrywomen, bartenders, or servants to wealthy whites. Racist attitudes were thus reinforced. Many doctors concluded that the soaring rate of tuberculosis among urban blacks was the evident consequence of quitting the salubrious, outdoor life of the plantation. Hadn't "negroes" actually been far healthier as slaves? (Though the TB epidemic, in one physician's sinister words, might at least "solve the negro problem.") In short, Tomes concludes, "for many middle-class Americans in the early 1900s, the association of poor, immigrant, and non-white citizens with disease germs only deepened their feelings of class prejudice, nativism, and racism."

But Tomes is too astute a historian to fall into the trap of representing medicine as nothing other than a tool of bigotry and domination. In actuality, the germ theory proved a double-edged sword. "The microbe of disease is no respecter of persons," judged Cyrus Edson, a New York City health commissioner. Indeed, it was a "social leveller"; or, in the popular parlance, "germs know no color line." Bearing this in mind, some doctors and health-workers went on to proclaim the "socialism of the microbe." It would be bacteriology's role to aid reconstruction and bring a divided people together against a common enemy.

Tomes illustrates these developments by a fascinating case history of events in Atlanta. Around the turn of the century the city was riven by terrible outbreaks of anti-black violence, including venom tar-



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geted against tubercular blacks. Out of that poisonous situation, however, there also arose the Negro Anti-Tuberculosis Association in Atlanta in 1914, which found ways of cooperating effectively with parallel white associations devoted to improving public health, thereby forging some measure of shared civic purpose. Bacteriology could build bridges as well as barriers.

In a similar way, at a time when labor relations were otherwise growing more bitter, the war on disease in the workplace might result in the collaboration of unions and bosses in pursuit of hygiene. Even then, the bacteriological battle proved a mixed blessing, for it could easily result in the singling out of the sick as the true enemy. "The irony here, as with the whole antituberculosis movement," comments Tomes, "is that the growing consciousness of infection developed in the name of labor solidarity led to an increasing ostracization of sick workers," for a healthy workplace was often a prime union demand.

What is missing from this splendid book is a discussion that truly brings out the political dimensions of the germ ideology. Just how far did bacteriology lead to new legislative powers and bureaucratic interventions, sanctioned by the name of scientific medicine? And what part did the imagery of germs play in wider ideologies of war, struggle, and conquest in the era of the First World War and America's rise to great power status? The strength of Tomes's book, however, lies in the subtle and convincing way in which it traces the transformations in everyday beliefs, experiences, and habits produced by medicine's migration from the laboratory to the lavatory. Skillfully researched and skillfully written, it charts the "revolution in personal hygiene" that helped to create a safer environment even as it produced new prejudices about purity and danger. In their way, prejudices can be just as dangerous as germs.

ROY PORTER's new book, *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind: A Medical History of Humanity*, has just been published by Norton.

Late Expectations

BY KARL MILLER

Jack Maggs by Peter Carey

(Knopf, 306 pp., $24)

Peter Carey first saw the light in Bacchus Marsh, Australia, in 1943, and went on to write books which are steeped in Bacchus Marsh and its extensive environs. He now lives in New York, having come up from down under like the hero of his new book, which is set in nineteenth-century London. He is an Australian and a cosmopolitan. He has a fine body of work behind him, and in front of him too, we are entitled to hope, for all the distance that he has placed between his native country and first subject-matter, which have served him so well. His energy and versatility, his fertility and flair, are prodigious.

He has a head for history, and for intertextuality. His novel *Oscar and Lucinda* owes something to Edmund Gosse's Victorian memoir *Father and Son*, and his new book, *Jack Maggs*, a Gothic entertainment, is also interested in fathers and sons. It derives from a novel by Dickens. *Great Expectations* has in it a boy and a marsh, where this boy aids a convict during an escape, a convict named Abel Magwitch who is then transported to colonial Australia, and who returns to haunt his snobbish helper, to be hated by him, but eventually loved. Magwitch has prospered in the colonies, and has secretly financed a rise in the world for his helper. "Yes, Pip, dear boy," the old lag exults, with hideous fatherliness, after his repatriation, "I've made a gentleman on you."

Now read on, says Carey in effect. Except that *Jack Maggs* is not a sequel, it is the reauthorized version of an old story. It stands in relation to Dickens's book more or less as John Le Carré's recent Panamanian novel, *The Tailor of Panama*, does to Graham Greene's *Our Man in Havana*. It is the same but different. Here, too, a prodigal father returns, and Pip is found sprawling in a gay club, none too pleased to be tracked by his benefactor. Among the departures and the innovations is a version of the young Charles Dickens, alias Tobias Oates, a writer who wants to make a book of this savage arrival, knife in sock, from the back of beyond, to cash in, if you like, on the colonial's delicious period sufferings, those of a literary culture prone to victims and dark corners.

The novel begins in Clerkenwell. This is a district to the east of Central London which has a small literature of its own, now enlarged by Carey. Oliver Twist proceeded through Clerkenwell, past Sadler's Wells Theatre, on his way to Fagin's den. Eliot speaks its name in *Four Quartets*, and Arnold Bennett used it in 1923 in *Riceyman Steps*, a powerful novel about a miser, in which he says that baths are rare in Clerkenwell, and manages to commit the offense of also saying that, in general, "some women are eager to be beaten." Clerkenwell sits on a hill which overlooks Bloomsbury to the west: to go down in that direction is to go up in the world. In Carey's novel, "a humble grocer" of the district, bathless presumably, by the name of Percy Buckle, is enabled by a stroke of fortune to descend to a house in Great George Street, a real street, still standing. He is joined there incognito by Jack Maggs—in the role of servant, and in pursuit of his sentimental journey of paternal reunion—to the fascination and the disruption of the household. Nearby, in Lamb's Conduit Street, also extant, Oates mesmerizes Maggs, extracting from him, under the hypnotic spell, confessional stuff about his penal past.

The novel reeks of English smells and English secrets. There are no secrets and no orphans like those of last-century Britain, and this is not lost on the author of *Jack Maggs*. The terrain is subtly handled, and the language of the novel draws, subtly too, on an ancient and modern London vernacular. A phrase like "ever so cross" feels at once old and new. The novel portrays a colorful about-to-be Victorian London, but it doesn't behave like the conventional historical novel, and it is sparing with scenery sentences like "he went out into the drizzling night where he discovered nothing more than a passing whore with a cane basket and a boy with a lantern holding a horse."

Jack Maggs is a stern fellow. There develops a tenderness between him and the gently depicted housemaid Mercy Larkin, but he also carries the darkness of his ill-treatment and hard times. Hand her the pills, he orders the adulterous Oates, with reference to Oates's pregnant sister-in-law. If he doesn't do so, adds Maggs, "I will have to hurt her." Emotions are often unexpected in Carey's fiction. "Strong emotions" come "like unexpected guests" to "illywhacker"—the liar and confidence man—in Carey's marvelous comic extravaganza of that name.

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which appeared in 1985. *Illywhacker* is set during the aftermath of the First World War. Jack McGrath, a rough diamond and self-made magnate, responds to a tale of childhood woe from the grown confidence man by suddenly and oddly saying: "Here's a pound." The illywhacker, who is both indifferent to money and hungry for a quid, hangs on to that particular quid, gives it to a passing swagman, but then reclaims it. This is an episode which is fairly low on predictability, but is nonetheless lifelike for that. It is later found to supply a motif for the novel.

Carey's new novel, too, springs surprises of that kind. You don't always know what the characters are going to feel, or what some of the secrets which excite them are. These people are sometimes quite mysterious and out of the blue. At times there is a sense of untethered, free-floating affect. Late in the book, "having finally begun to understand the extent to which his secrets had been burgled, Jack Maggs became, by degrees, severely agitated." You'd expect him to have understood this long before.

What also remains a little mysterious is why Carey has chosen to play, as he does with such brilliance, this game of repeating with variations what someone else has already written. But *Illywhacker* provides a clue.

Carey has powerful feelings about the Australian past and the red-fisted, broad-beamed, house-building, bullock-driving inhabitants of its early days, its Frontier. Among them are the old lags who became bosses and were sometimes to become and to beget English gentlemen, "Imaginary Englishmen," he calls them. These ancestral rough diamonds—who are proud of their posh sons, but also appear to have produced the anti-English swagman Rupert Murdoch—are well worth their pages. Some of them turn into imaginary Englishmen. Others don't: Jack McGrath, for one. The illywhacker is no Englishman either, and he complains of those perfidious forefathers who have sold out to the oppressor:

> The minute they began to make a quid they started to turn into Englishmen. Cocky Abott was probably descended from some old cockney lag, who had arrived here talking flash language, a pickpocket, a bread-stealer, and now, a hundred years later his descendants were dressing like his gaolers and torturers, disowning the language, softening their vowels, greasing their way into the plummy speech of the men who had ordered their ancestors lashed until the flesh had been dragged in bleeding strips from their naked backs.
> The old man was as rough as bags but he was proud because he had sired an Englishman.

No wonder Carey took to the plot of *Great Expectations*. He has plenty to say against these forefathers, but he likes them when they are like Jack McGrath, and Jack McGrath prefigures Jack Maggs. McGrath is reckoned by his fellow citizens not to have a bad bone in his body, which is more than can be said about Maggs. But there is certainly a resemblance. Both McGrath and the illywhacker contain elements of Maggs. They are deceivers and pioneers.

Carey is very far from speaking up in either of these novels for gentility and the siring of Englishmen. But he has a taste for the old Oz of the sires in question. This can hardly be the whole story of why he chose to write the present book, but it may be part of it. A part of what drives the new New Yorker is a nostalgia for the primitive virtue of his ancestors, bless their broad beams. The manipulative relation to Maggs of Carey's brilliant young writer, his Dickens figure, is very different from his own, as the author of the book. He is on the side of his Jacks.

This might be thought a sentimental suggestion. Perhaps it is. Maggs, after all, is a mixed blessing, and the ambivalence that went into his imagining could be taken to express an ambivalence about Australia, of the sort that many feel about their native place. Yet it may help to explain why Peter Carey has rewritten *Great Expectations*, and why he might be thought to be objecting here to that novel's colonial presuppositions, its (surely not unqualified) regard for the English gentleman.

There are no indications in the book that some women are eager to be beaten. Carey has as much time for the difficulties faced by dependent women, it should be said, as he does for any beefy forebear. One of his finest passages is awarded to the crossing of a road by a destitute female, who falls before an approaching brewer's dray.

> She had been carrying onions in her apron and now all these treasures went rolling out across the coal-black road. The Clydesdale's soup-plate hooves scattered the onions. The wheel of the brewer's dray passed by the woman's head. She rose hastily and began to gather up her onions.

Carey knows these onions. He writes well about poverty. And in writing well about his ancestors, as he also does, Carey has written both about poverty and about something worse. Whatever else it is, *Jack Maggs* is a post-colonial response to an effete England that has tortured its delinquents.

KARL MILLER is the author of *Rebecca's Vest*, a memoir.

TRB *continued from page 6*

ethnic-intellectual-Southern coalition. And this ideological slipperiness, Skowronek argues, enhances his reputation for political trickery.

Such readings of history (especially in the hyperabbreviated form presented above) are bound to seem contrived and subjective. But the preemptive model—formulated before Bill Clinton took office—fits his presidency well. Clinton beat George Bush because he inoculated himself against the kinds of ideological attacks that had eviscerated Democratic candidates for a generation. As one Bush aide lamented to *Newsweek*, "I can't figure out a way to run against him from the right." This inoculation shifted the 1992 campaign debate to whether Clinton's centrist rhetoric could be trusted, which dovetailed with revelations about his character. After Clinton failed to reverse Reaganism with the health care bill, he once again distanced himself from his party's ideological base and won reelection by coopting conservative cultural and fiscal themes.

Over and over, Bill Clinton's opponents have tried to draw a connection between his ideological transgressions and his personal ones. Cliff Jackson, the Arkansas lawyer who led *American Spectator* reporter David Brock to the Paula Jones story, justified his actions by saying, "Sex is a symptom of the basic Bill Clinton—the deception, the manipulation, and exploitation of people." In 1992, GOP national chairman Rich Bond said that the Bush-Clinton race "revolves around a fairly simple proposition. Who can be trusted more as leader of America and the free world?" Four years later, Bob Dole ran on the slogan, "A Better Man for a Better America." Last week, House Majority Whip Tom DeLay said, "When you have a president, who in my opinion has cheated on his wife, he will cheat on the American people."

The relationship between ideology and character still holds. Commentators keep noting the contradiction that, in the face of the most serious allegations yet, Bill Clinton is at the height of his popularity. Yet Skowronek's theory suggests that this is no contradiction. Attacks on Clinton's character have been fiercest when he is least vulnerable ideologically. In 1994, after the budget, gays in the military, and health care, Republicans didn't need character—they could simply attack Clinton as a liberal. Now, most people are pretty sure he's not one. That's part of the reason he's in this mess. It's also part of the reason he'll probably survive.

PETER BEINART

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

High lying

JUST ON THE ODDS, IT IS BEGINning to look approximately 99.87 percent certain that Bill Clinton has done bad things. He bonked Gennifer Flowers, which isn't so bad. But he also probably pawed and very crudely propositioned Paula Jones. He may also have pawed and very crudely propositioned Kathleen Willey. He or his staff also may (or may not) have misused FBI files, abused former employees of the White House travel office, benefited from the doings of financial shysters, paid hush money to a crony, raised campaign funds in highly creative ways, and variously played fast and loose with this rule and that one. So there may be many lies and misdeeds for which President Clinton might conceivably be brought to book. Instead, however, the law has grimly set about nailing him for the one sort of lie that a civilized culture not only condones but depends upon: a consensual lie about consensual adultery.

BY SIZABLE MARGINS, THE PUBlic believes that Clinton lied when he said, "I did not have sexual relations with that woman, Miss Lewinsky." Good-government liberals are dismayed by the public's easygoing tolerance of Clinton's alleged mendacity. Good-morals conservatives are dismayed by the public's easygoing tolerance of Clinton's alleged immorality. Actually, in this case it is the moralizing elites, rather than the shrugging public, who just don't get it.

TRY A THOUGHT EXPERIMENT. You're at a dinner party. In full public hearing, someone demands to know whether you're cheating on your wife. Civilized norms require you to evade the question. But suppose the boor persists, demanding an answer. If you must give an answer, civilized opinion requires you to look him in the eye and say, "Of course I don't cheat on my wife"—even if you do cheat on her. Moreover, civilized opinion is not angry with you for lying; it is angry with him for demanding to know. You are invited to the next party. He isn't.

THERE IS A REASON FOR THIS peculiar preference for hypocrisy. The tradition of lying about adultery, as I have argued in these pages (see "Live and Let Lie," September 22, 1997), is not only hallowed but indispensable. In Iran or Afghanistan, adulterers are whipped or stoned, and in libertine communes and spouse-swapping circuits they are openly accepted. But, in middle-class America, which aspires to be both free and faithful, the only way to insist that adultery is intolerable while actually tolerating it is by hiding it in the closet. We therefore have a rule: If the adulterer and the spouse both prefer to hush up the affair, they lie, and no further questions are asked. Everybody pretends to believe them, and the children slumber untroubled by sin.

SEEN IN THIS LIGHT, the Lewinsky affair is merely the latest triumph of legal absolutism over social custom. Given the state of the law, and the existence of taped evidence that the president lied under oath and encouraged Monica Lewinsky to do the same, Kenneth Starr's investigation looks legally sound, in fact, probably unavoidable. What prosecutor could walk away from such evidence? On the other hand, if you leave the law to one side and instead view the matter in a social context, the same investigation looks mindlessly perverse and destructive.

YES, CLINTON PROBABLY DID LIE under oath, which was illegal. Yes, the man is a lowlife. And, yes, it is best not to have a lowlife as president. However, when you do have a lowlife as president, the best way to save a bad situation is to pretend he is not a lowlife (otherwise known as lying for the children's sake). Clinton's first impulse about Monica—and Hillary's first impulse, and apparently Monica's—was to evade and lie, not just to save their political skins, but also because, in that situation, evading and lying is what families do. In the ancient social compact, it is up to Hillary to decide whether to accept her husband's behavior. If she pretends to believe him, then we pretend to believe her. The public, for its part, was prepared to uphold its end of the bargain and look the other way. After all, the fact that Clinton was an adulterous lowlife was hardly news. But the law—the sexual harassment law, the tort law, the independent counsel law, and every other kind of law—took a bulldozer to the old deal.

HERE'S A PREDICTION: ONCE WE begin outing adulterers, whether to investigate perjury or to build sexual harassment suits or for whatever reason, we will no longer be able to stigmatize adultery, because the practice is just too common. People will drop civilized pretense and just say, "Yes, I cheat, want to make something of it?" The Lewinsky affair, in which lying about adultery is being treated as a legal offense rather than a civilized norm, gives a preview of the result: Adultery is being condemned legally and excused morally—exactly the opposite of what ought to happen.

ANOTHER THOUGHT EXPERIMENT. Imagine that there had been no Paula Jones lawsuit, because (granted, this is a stretch) over the past 15 years the sexual harassment law had been written and interpreted with a modicum of restraint. Then the behavior of which the president is suspected—having sex with a young intern, exiling her to a cushy job in the Pentagon, helping find her another job in order to keep her happy and quiet, and so on—would be grist for the tabloids and gutter press, which know how to handle such matters, rather than for $300-an-hour litigators and the independent counsel, who plainly do not. Alas, today's prurient and intrusive workplace-harassment jurisprudence, with its bizarre combination of pinched sexual puritanism and wanton legal promiscuity, set the law on a collision course with decency. Now the train wreck has happened.

TO FIND FAULT WITH THE LAW IS not to find virtue in President Clinton; in any case, he and other high government officials may learn something from being bitten by the overzealous harassment rules that they cheerfully put in place. And, yes, the president of the United States should obey the law and not cheat with interns. But this is the real world, not *The Sound of Music*. If most Americans choose to condemn the boorish inquisitor rather than the hypocritical adulterer, their doing so does not suggest that the country is sinking into lawlessness or postmodern cynicism. It suggests the opposite: People are clinging, as best they can, to an ancient folk ethic whose deep social wisdom the law does not begin to comprehend.

JONATHAN RAUCH

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